

A DREAM OF A THRONE

BY CHARLES F. EMBREE

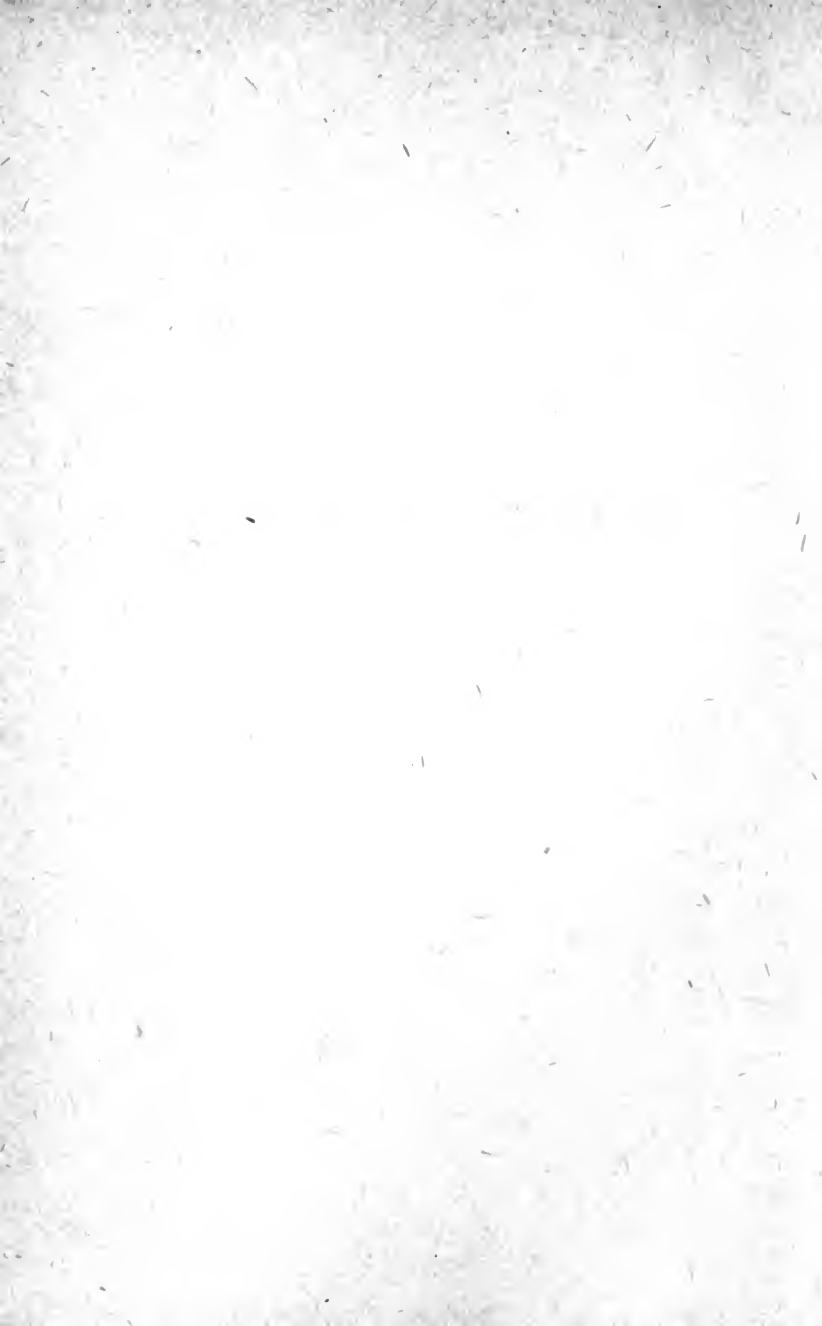








A Dream of a Throne





“‘I cannot, O Holy Mother, I cannot.’”

A Dream of a Throne

The Story of a Mexican Revolt

BY

CHARLES FLEMING EMBREE



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TO MY WIFE

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CONTENTS

PART FIRST

	PAGE
THE MONASTERY	I

PART SECOND

TIZAPAN	76
-------------------	----

PART THIRD

THE ISLAND	283
----------------------	-----



A Dream of a Throne



PART FIRST

THE MONASTERY

CHAPTER I

AT nightfall of a day in May, 1833, there was lamentation in a fisher's hut on the banks of the Mexican lake, Chapala. The shadows of St. Michael's hill, which rises high and rocky out of the town's centre, had long since fallen across the Chapala plaza. The sun had set in red and gold, and the waves, as the darkness came on, were rising slowly. The hut was of adobe with steep, thatched roof. Its rooms were two and its floors earthen. There were many other huts like this in a long line to the east, and between them and the water stretched smooth brown sand where white nets, for two hundred yards, were extended on poles to dry. The nets should be taken down at this hour or earlier, and rolled into a ball, and the tiny black boat that should carry them into the lake a little later on rode restless and empty at the shore. The larger *canoa*, too, its one sail furled, tossed yonder on the waves, unused for days, — and the nets remained extended with the wind fluttering them.

A boy of fourteen years came out of the hut with a little bundle of rockets in his hand, and sat down near a tree. He was much whiter of face than the majority of the inhabitants of this fishing village. His features were clearer cut and more intelligent. His eyes were deep and, at present, sad, for there were tears in them. The lake breeze dried the tears. He untied the rockets in absorption, — the absorption of a man who has seen or dreamed much, and with none of the air of a child. He was dressed in loose white, the common clothing of this simple people of the high tropics. He wore sandals on his feet.

He lit the rockets one by one with wax matches, and they shot into the air hissing, and burst with sudden reports on the night's stillness. It somehow seemed a very solemn thing. There was no play in this. The last of them left him in grief, as plainly written on his face as though he had added twenty years to his few. The crack, crack of the explosives in the air had aroused no one along the shore. The boats still rode uneasily and empty, and the nets fluttered untouched, like ghosts. In the hut, however, there was heard the loud wailing of a man, — a hysterical wailing rather than a grief-stricken one, such that a philosophic listener would not have pitied long, for surely the mourner would soon recover and be as boisterous in another direction. A little girl of four years, in cotton dress oddly long, crept out, awe-struck, went to the boy where he still sat, and silently hugged him. Then she whispered:

“What is he crying about, Vicente? What is the matter with her? Is she — is she dead, brother Vicente?”

"Clarita," he said, holding to her, "she is dying, and the rockets have gone before her, and we shall have no mother — nobody, nobody."

Whereat the little girl sobbed and crept back into the hut, among banana and castor trees that stood about it. The boy did not move. When the wailing of the man permitted, Vicente could hear the low voice of a priest within; the same who had sent him out with the rockets to fire, according to custom, as the soul departed.

It was at length quite dark, save for the stars, brilliant enough. Only a little candle-light fell three feet outside the door. A gendarme came round the corner not far away, where the two white church towers stood high, past some lime-kilns, and along the row of fishers' huts. He arrived at the candle-lit doorway and stood in the light with his hat off.

"Is she dead, Francisco?" he asked.

"Oh, my God! Dios! Dios!" wailed the man within. "She is gone — the life of my life!"

The priest was quiet enough and the girl again awe-struck. The gendarme handed a paper to the priest, who read it.

"This is an order," said the latter, "that she is to be buried at once. Why, there is no contagion here."

The gendarme shrugged his shoulders.

"People are afraid of small-pox," he said.

The dead woman lay on matting and blankets on the dirt floor, with candles at her head and feet, her face covered. The little girl came silently to her and sat down at her head.

"What!" shrieked Francisco, a fisherman not yet forty. "To-night! Animals! Beasts! Will you tear my heart from my body?"

"They are afraid, señor, all the town, for there has been the disease this year in Jocotepec, and some women who have looked at Doña Julia have said it was like it."

"This is blasphemy! Holy Mary protect us! In the night — and to take her away now! Oh, Dios! Dios!" And he wailed afresh and more hysterically.

The priest knew that there was no small-pox here, but — it was as well now as another time. Francisco's grief was not very deep. The order was given, let it be executed. The town had indeed, foolishly, been afraid of the hut. It seemed there would be difficulty in securing men to carry the coffin. The gendarme went out. He would find them, said he. He went no further than two huts away, and after parley returned with two fishermen. They passed Vicente sitting, without motion, on the sand, and entered the hut. The two were named, respectively, Anastasio and Fortino. The one was long and lean, and the other massive. They, as Francisco, wore the white clothing and the sandals. There were, too, colored sashes round their waists.

There was little else said. Anastasio brought a rude wooden coffin that seemed to have been awaiting the moment under the banana-trees. Fortino remained outside, while his companion carried it in. Presently the latter and the gendarme came out again, bearing it awkwardly. Coffins were sometimes carried to the grave on a table, the table being hoisted to the single bearer's back. They had no table here, and no one would lend, for fear of the disease. So the great Fortino, strong as a bull, lifted it lightly to his shoulder, and went tramping away. Anastasio, the gendarme, and the

priest followed in silence. Francisco threw himself down in the hut and beat his skull with fierceness. The burial party was nigh swallowed up in gloom, yonder a little way across the beach, when the girl ran out laboriously through the sand, fascinated. She was at their heels, reaching up her little hands to the coffin, and stumbling. She did not sob or cry, but they heard her quick breath and turned in surprise, whereat she clung to Fortino, looking up at the coffin piteously. Only the gendarme was moved and loosed her grip.

At that moment, Vicente, who had but just perceived the child, came running, seized her in his arms, and bore her back. She struggled, and at length sobbed bitterly; but he held her, and sat down with her where he had been before. She clung to him then with her head buried on his shoulder, while he watched the retreating shadows of the burial party. They were barely seen yonder where the white nets ended. They were turning into a lane now, between two huts. They were gone. Dry-eyed, he stared at the scarcely-seen corner for many minutes. He did not know it; but he did not feel like a boy, nor was his face a boyish face.

He knew she had been good to them both, and that to have a mother was, somehow, to have that which is most necessary. When they had eaten the *frijoles* and the *tortillas* there in the hut with her, it had always been she who had prepared them. She had done it as though she loved to do it. She had not been like that woman four huts away, who beat her children. Yes, it was plain she had loved them. When they had played together, he and Clarita, here on the sand so many, many evenings

after the moon was up, while the nets were drawing fish, and the waves lapped the shore gently, she had always been watching over them. She had been the true, the real part of all living, though he had not known it till now. Francisco had been only another person who came and went and fished and was boisterous. When they had awakened in the morning, and Clarita had hugged him, it was the mother they saw first. When they lay down on the matting to sleep at night, she had watched them and made them warm. He began to realize in some larger way that she had been above the life that she lived; at least, she had been more faithful than her race. So he held the child tightly, there in the dark, and did not want to move, and a dormant loneliness that had long belonged to him took shape.

An hour passed, and she was asleep in his arms, contented. Francisco had become silent. By faint distant whistles and the sound of an oar coming across the water, Vicente knew there was fishing farther away at other parts of the shore. But Francisco's nets, which Fortino and Anastasio had been wont to draw with him, hung idly as before, and there was no fishing here. He grew stiff, but not sleepy. After a long time he was surprised that the priest returned and entered the hut. A grunt from within told of the awaking of Francisco. The latter's grief had not kept him from sleep.

"Has he come?" said the priest.

"No," said Francisco.

The boy heard no more, and there seemed to be no more said. His attention was suddenly attracted by the faint plashing of oars a little way out on the waves. He strained his eyes, and at length saw a

shadow, which became, indistinctly, a boat. It was strange, thought he, that a boat — and a little boat — should be coming here in the night, for to-night there was no fishing. The splash came nearer, and the boat touched the bank. He could just see that a form stepped out of it. There seemed to be no anchoring or tying of the vessel, and there was no more noise.

The figure came over the sand. He would have thought it a woman had it not been so tall. It moved slowly, and passed within a few yards of him and the sleeping child without seeing them. Vicente noted then what he had not seen before, that a candle had been placed in the little yard of his own home, under the banana-trees. The figure moved to this candle and stood at the door, and he saw it more plainly. It was a man, but robed. He would have been very tall had he not been bent. The light barely showed to the staring boy eyes of terrible lustre, and a face white. This last was the more wonderful to Vicente. He had never seen a really white face before. Even the priest of Chapala was almost as dark as his neighbors. The new-comer went in as noiselessly and mysteriously as he had come, and the scarce-seen shadow of his boat rose and fell beside that other little fishing craft.

For another hour there were the murmurings of conversation within, sometimes only whispers. Once or twice Francisco's voice broke out in passion, and once in a broad jest. Vicente thought of creeping closer and listening. But his sorrow and his loneliness, the great night and the child, put the idea out of his head; he only sat still. In spite of the continuous sound of voices, sometimes eager,

sometimes arguing, often urging, and at last even threatening, the boy nearly forgot the new-comer. He grew tired, and would have wakened his sister and gone in. But there was stirring, then, and the priest and the boatman came out. The latter went to the beach slowly, as he had come, but the boat did not depart. The priest came to Vicente.

"He who has just come," said he to the boy kindly, "is a man greater than are we. For many years he has been a friend of mine, of Francisco, and of Julia. You are left alone now, Vicente. He has come to take you with him, not so far away but that you can return, and he will show you new things."

The boy stood up, wakening the girl, who still clung to him. His eyes were very wide open and black, and he stared a moment in silence and wonder at the priest.

"Why," he said simply and resolutely, "I do not want to see new things."

"Listen, boy. As yet you know nothing, even of yourself. You have lived here in this hut since your earliest memory. Will you not believe that there is a wide world beyond this, with strange deeds and strange gains in it? You will go to-night because I, your priest, tell you to. You will learn many things you did not know. And you will learn more of yourself — of yourself, do you understand? And to-morrow you may return — if you wish."

"Oh! what is the hitch now?" cried Francisco, bursting, in irritation, out of the hut. "Bring him in!"

Vicente was led in, bewildered. He put the girl down, and she sat beside him on the floor.

"What are you hanging back for?" said Fran-

cisco. "Haven't I raised you and taken care of you? And when I tell you it's all right, it is, isn't it? Origins!" And he struck his palm with his fist. "It's to be explored. Can't you show any interest in the origin?"

"The origin of what?" asked the boy. "I don't know what you mean."

"Then go with him and learn. It'll pay."

"And leave Clarita?"

"You may return to-morrow night — if you wish," said the priest.

Vicente was unconvinced. The priest led him, then, to the water's edge.

"We shall speak to the other," he said.

They found the boat, and, a little way from it, the tall man standing on the shore. The latter approached and laid a gentle hand on Vicente's shoulder. Then he stooped and talked to him. His voice was low and sibilant, but kind. It seemed to hold a magic in it for the boy, who knew not why, but half wanted to follow him.

"Come with me, my son," said the speaker. "It is necessary. I will teach you, to-night, many things you have wanted to know. I am your mother's, your father's, the priest's friend. They and I say it is best."

In spite of the magic a sudden panic seized Vicente. He broke away and ran to the hut. He caught Clarita in his arms and cried:

"Oh! they are going to take me away from you! I can't leave Clarita!"

Passion swept over Francisco's face. He waited no more, but tore the girl away from him, seized him in a grip of iron, and carried him back to the shore. Clarita, terrified, seeing her best-beloved

dragged away, cried aloud in that frightful dread and wretchedness known only to a child. At the shore Vicente heard her calling his name and weeping. She was following him, in the second bereavement of the night, toward the water. Francisco ran back and stopped her, and they two were again in the hut. The priest held the boy by the shoulder. Another shadow was seen then, running out from the banana-trees across the beach to the shore, — a small shadow. It came boldly up to the boat's side, and a girl's voice called out:

"What are you going to do with him?"

It was a very young voice. This girl could not have been more than ten years of age. Her face could not be plainly seen, but she was tall for her age. Her dress was shorter than Clarita's, and her head and feet were bare.

"Who is this?" said the boatman kindly, at the same time reassuring Vicente by the pressure of his hand.

"This is Pepa," said the trembling Vicente. "Her mother keeps the restaurant."

"I am Vicente's sweetheart," spoke up Pepa without hesitation, and frankly. "Vicente is going to marry me when he grows up. Do you think I would stay at home when his mother died? No. I am not afraid of the small-pox; and I ran away and came. I have been hid under the banana-trees since dark. What are you going to do with him?"

The tall stranger slowly took a wax match from a box, lighted it, and held it to her face. It lit a keen interest in his own eyes. He smiled. There was one gray lock falling down on his white cheek, wherein were wrinkles.

"Ah, she is beautiful. You will marry him

when he grows up?" he said, as the match went out. "Good. And you want him now to go with me and see some of the world you will conquer together."

"Oh! is that what you are taking him for?" said she, as though she understood it. She meditated, while Vicente wavered between the fascination which the scene and the man were exercising on him and his fears. She seemed altogether too old for her age.

"She is a strange child," muttered the priest.

"Yes, Vicente, you ought to go," said she.

The boy was lifted bodily into the boat. He struggled much, but it was of no avail. Within, he sank down, trembling more. The robed form of the stranger entered after him and cut off escape. He was startled at the rising of a rower at the boat's farther end. He had thought there were only the two of them in the vessel. The rower said nothing, but took up his oars, and the boat was pushed off. Even yet Vicente heard the sobs of Clarita in the hut as she cried his name, — the hut that had been his home, and from which the woman who had loved him had been carried away on a fisherman's shoulders.

"Good-by! good-by!" cried Pepa from the shore. "And you will marry me when you come back!"

It was all a dream to him. He was bewildered, and could not think. Crouched on the boat's bottom as it glided away into the darkness, the last he heard from the shore was little Clarita's voice. She was weeping and calling his name.

CHAPTER II

THEY were out of sight of the shore almost at once, save for the faint candle-light at the hut. That too disappeared when they sank into a deep trough of the waves, and when they arose again Vicente could see it no more. He was on the floor of the boat with the oarsman behind him and the old man in the stern before him, and there was no sound but that of the oars and the waves. He gained assurance sufficient to look about. The oarsman was not to be distinctly descried. He wore a sombrero that made a pointed shadow against the sky as he swayed back and forth. His silence alone was remarkable, and as he pulled he sometimes sighed deeply. There was a slim little mast with a sail furled on it, unused because they were going against the wind. They appeared to him to be aiming straight out across the lake, a thing he had heard called madness in such a frail bark as this and in the night. For the worst storms come at night and the nearest shore straight across is twenty miles away. He was not a child to be long cowed. He gained self-command. That black figure in the boat's stern must know its course. A kind of pride or haughtiness came to the child and he sat still, scorning to be afraid.

It seemed hours during which nothing happened, and there was no word spoken. The ceaseless rise and fall of the waves, their lapping on the boat's sides,

and the stroke and the sigh of the oarsman, these were all. He longed to see the face whose eyes had fascinated him. The form was always there in the same position, but the face unseen. He believed it must be midnight or later, and in spite of the strain he was growing sleepy, when the wind changed. He saw the old man's arm make a slow motion in the air, and the oarsman ceased rowing, hoisted the little sail, and crawled to the stern, sitting down beside the other. Dread and doubt swept over the boy in turn as he watched them.

The boat sped on now, striking the waves boldly, and the sail was full. That great loneliness came over Vicente again. It was the loneliness of the lake thus dark and unknown, the loneliness of the night, and the loneliness of his heart. He was tired and he lay on the boat's bottom. He was thinking of Clarita when he fell asleep.

He was awakened by the striking of the boat upon a rock gently. He started up and the rower was leaping out to a shore dimly seen. The sail was down and the boulders of a high and rugged ascent loomed about. Half the night sky was shut away by a mass of land whose rugged edge above him cut a zigzag line along the stars. He had never been, since he could remember, five miles from the village of Chapala. Nor were any coasts opposite the village known to him. Familiar names of certain Indian towns on the lake's border were in his mind, but here was no town. Nor did he know how many hours the journey had occupied. He had come long over black waves. He had arrived in the night at an unknown and seemingly deserted coast. He knew no more.

His companion, following the oarsman, lifted the

boy out to the rocks. The oarsman was again communicated with by signs. He was apparently deaf and executed his orders like a slave. The boat was tied in a little cove, the chain rattling startlingly on the otherwise complete silence. The oarsman went on up the ascent, picking the tortuous path among rocks. Vicente preceded the old man and struggled up. He was at length lifted into the latter's arms and borne, as though his weight were nothing. A wild goat and kids started from the rocks and bleated, leaped away, and were gone in the gloom. The climbers were a hundred feet above the water when they came to a wall. The servant scrambled over it and took the boy. The wall was in ruins with rough stones fallen at its base. There was tangled vegetation here and cacti lifted their myriad flat leaves against the sky, for the summit of the ascent was reached. The oarsman put the boy down and between the two men Vicente walked on. There was no further sign of life, and he imagined he could see the faint gray of the dawn. Before them rose huge irregular piles, formless. A little nearer and the piles were ruins too, ruins of buildings vaster than any he had ever seen. They entered in between two walls that broke off aimlessly at the entrance. All seemed stone, heavy, irregular, silent. All was deserted. They climbed over heaps of rocks fallen from heights that loomed broken overhead. They were at length under a high-arched roof which, with its walls, formed a black tunnel whose end he could not see. At its beginning the arch too had fallen, and indistinctly he could descry another arched roof that joined it. The tunnel was double.

Within they walked over soft mold and the place was damp. When they had penetrated some distance

into this passage the leader paused and struck a light. There were sheer walls surrounding them, rising to the shadowy arch. A door in the masonry here blocked the path. This the servant opened and led the way, holding the match, down stone steps, and the boy was pushed after him. They arrived thus at a chamber where the servant lit a candle. He was bade by a sign from his master to withdraw, and he did so, there being only time for Vicente to see as he turned to the door that his hair was straggling and long and his face disfigured by a great scar stretching from the corner of his mouth across his cheek.

There were heavy benches and a seat made of the fallen stones. The floor was of stones also, as were the walls and the roof. There were shelves built up irregularly of pieces of the ruins, and a bottle of wine and some bread were on one of them. A couch covered with blankets stood opposite the one door, and stones formed a table whereon were books and candles.

"Sit down," said the old man.

The boy sat and looked at his companion. He had not seen the latter's face plainly till now. It was a face that he never forgot. It seemed half smiling and half grim. It might be fascinating or terrible—its white forehead, its wrinkled cheeks, the strong mouth defying age with the lines about it that might mean grief, or power, or crime, the eyes that alone showed a hidden fire which must have burned in vain for years, the gray hair falling round it. The man came nearer and laid on the boy's shoulder a hand that was long, of large joints, and heavy. His voice was oddly gentle.

"You have never heard of a hermit," he said.

"No," said the boy.

"Nor do you know why men leave the world and bury themselves away like animals in the depths of the earth."

He stood long, musing over the child, scrutinizing his features. He sighed then, like one stricken, and turned away and sat down on a bench by the table.

"I will tell you why," he said at last.

He turned fully to Vicente again and never ceased, till he ceased speaking, to hold him with his eyes. He knew the power of that gaze. He knew and felt the weight of his purposes. Under circumstances the most simple how impressionable is a child! Spell-bound, half terrified, how could this one escape the singular influence of his unknown companion? Vicente's lips were drawn and his eyes were wide. Clarita's voice had died from his ears. Pepa was no more in his thoughts. Francisco, even she they had borne away, were forgotten. Only the unthought loneliness was there, and he listened.

"You live," continued the hermit, seating himself by the table, his voice low and distinct, "in the most unfortunate country on the face of the globe. She was conquered in blood, she was ridden in selfishness and brutality, she is exploited by adventurers and torn by revolutions. She *is* no country. And who owns her? Whose is the land and the right? There was, here on these plains and in these mountains, in the times gone by, a proud and noble race, your race. And the land was free and the government an empire. Your mother's fathers built cities under this same Mexican sun, and reared a state strong and beautiful. They were masters of the soil for centuries. They were proud, true, silent. They were bent on a civilization on whose very threshold they stood, when one fatal year, in the midst of their security,

came the sound of the Spanish gun. You have heard tales of the conquest. You do not know its ferocity, its bloodiness. Your own fathers were cut down like the corn in the field. Your fathers' cities were swept away in ruin. Your fathers' wives and daughters were seized and held for the basest purposes, and cast away. But for one all-merciful hand every individual of your race would have fallen in blood or pined in slavery, and your great-grandfathers, your mother, you yourself, would never have existed. That one merciful hand was the hand of the church. It could not restore to you your ancient lands; it could only save you from butchery or slavery and keep you alive, holding you in its bosom, warming and nourishing you, till you should have learned to be your masters. This it did. For many years you were slaves and it freed you and taught you religion. It has been your race's protector, your race's only hope."

The speaker's face was lit almost with the light that lights the face of the fanatic. He leaned farther over the rude table, stretched out a long finger at the awed listener, and continued:

"Child, to save a lost and fallen race is the noblest calling that a man can have. If that race be your own, and its blood leap in you, and you be fighting the battle of your butchered fathers and winning that which is by God's right yours, the task is infinitely great. Do you know, child, whose is that task?"

The boy could not have escaped from his companion's eye had he wished. He did not wish. He gazed at him and slowly shook his head. He was moved and thinking, and a flash of satisfaction came into the hermit's face.

"Boy," he said solemnly, "that task is yours."

There was silence for some seconds.

"How — how," said the youth, hesitatingly, "can it be mine?"

"You have seen the poverty of your own people. You have lived among them and you know their ignorance. Your priest tells me he has begun to teach you to read. The great light of written words will soon shine on you. Already, young as you are, I know you have begun to realize the difference between your people as they are and your people as they ought to be. Your enemies cry, 'Give them time! They will rise!' My son, they have had three hundred years, and they have not risen. Why? Because they are cheated of their own, and their conquerors alone have knowledge and civilization. They need one strong hand held out to help them up. They shall then attain that freedom and that greatness for which the church has held them and has waited."

"Why," said the boy, "the country is free. Hidalgo freed it."

A low, bitter laugh broke from the other.

"Free to what? To a hundred successive bondages. Child, where there is no stability, no government, there can be no freedom. Hidalgo, like his many followers, though his cry was liberty and his banner the Virgin, was an adventurer. How soon after his death did Iturbide's empire prove his weakness? That empire should have lived. There should be no republic here. This country's factions are too wild. She is too unsettled. Govern herself? Madness! She can no more govern herself than a wind can govern the sea it has lashed to fury. She needs one powerful, never-failing hand. Iturbide lacked the strength. He fled, returned, and died. Your land and your people have, since then, been given

over to a mob of madmen. Revolution has followed revolution. Government there is none. Lies, treachery, murder, self-aggrandizement, are the politics and the aim of these successive devastating flames. Your people are like starved sheep, driven bleating here and there, fleeing the forest fire to be caught in the barren rocks, and leaping the rocks only to fall into the sea. So-called governments hold you as the despairing player holds the dice and cast their fortunes with you. Each new blusterer lets you fall as you will, only that it be luck for him. Allende, Guerrero, Morelos—my son, what were they? Criminals with their fingers on your throat. And most blasphemous—”

Here he leaned farther forward and there was a singular smile on his face that drew the lines about his mouth into unpleasing prominence.

“The church itself, the vessel of God’s spirit, your only friend and protector, is exploited with you.”

There was a long silence after this, and the speaker sat watching the boy. The expression of the old man’s face sank into sadness. He raised his hand and stroked the long gray locks.

“My son,” said he at last, “you are coming to the rescue, and I shall tell you why. You were not born to fish or to plant corn on the shores of this lake. You were born to learn and to do. Your country and your people have waited long for one strong spirit. For the ancient empire lives yet, trodden though it is, in the depths of your national character. The time is coming when every bitter wrong you have suffered will bear its fruit at last, and the fire burst out. I have heard its warning. These last petty brawlers will light the match, for you and your race will endure no more. If I prove to you the

right is yours and the time has come, and give you the means and show you the way, will you follow and grow to be your people's liberator?"

The boy, wrought to a high pitch, threw his head down on his arms to the table and cried with a fervor that sounded strange in a boy's voice:

"I would — Holy Mary help me! I would do it if I could!"

"You can and you will. The woman who died to-night was not your mother."

The boy started up as though he had been struck. The other's face calmed him, and he sat down, holding his breath.

"Will you believe me? Have you faith that I am telling you the truth?"

"Yes," gasped the boy.

"Your mother died fourteen years ago. She came to the monastery one night in Guadalajara bringing you. Ah, I remember the night." He stopped and dreamed. Of all the many emotions that the face had shown, the sorrow on it then seemed the deepest. "I remember the night. She was nearly dead when she came. She died there. We took charge of you. Your eyes — ah, yes — your eyes were like hers, when the monk brought the candle and held it over you, and your hair was already black and thick." He paused again, dreaming. "Some of the monks knew her and her history, and they decided together that you should be kept and cared for. I will tell you who she was.

"Montezuma's was not the only so-called empire in the Mexican valley. There were two others on the banks of the Texcocoan lake. There was another city, too, almost as beautiful as his, the city of Texcoco. These three empires formed a league and

were, when your enemies conquered them, virtually equal. The kings of Texcoco were as royal as Montezuma himself, though the latter held the predominance in the councils and the wars. The three ruled all this land, farther to the north than this, and farther south than Yucatan. Before the conquest Texcoco was torn with wars of the succession. One branch of the royal family was driven away, a cousin of the king seizing the throne. A brother of that king was one of those driven out. In the event of there being no heir from him who held the throne or him who claimed it, this brother's descendants would be the rightful kings. After so many years, that has come to pass. That wronged Texcocan, after using all his powers in vain to win Montezuma to his cause, wandered in the mountains for many months. His brother at last came into his own through the intervention of Cortes, and he expected again to be taken into favor. In this treachery disappointed him. He who then took the throne feared this wandering brother would attempt a usurpation. The latter was hunted down just previous to the conquest and would have been killed. Absolutely alone he fled far to the west, over many mountains and plains, being days with scarcely any food. One evening near sunset he arrived at the summit of a ridge, and looked down into the bosom of this lake, then called Chapalac. The beauty of its circling mountains, the limpidness of its waters, soothed him. At his feet lay a little fishing village, the same they call to this day Tizapan. He descended, found shelter among these simple folk, kept the knowledge of his identity to himself, and spent his days and died there. But he had married one of the maidens of the village. To her alone he confided the secret and laid on her the solemn in-

junction that the knowledge of his royalty should go down, a sacred secret in the line, till some future date should restore it to its own. Just before his death he made her swear it. He died in ignorance of the fall of Mexico, and the fact that the kingdom whose secret his wife held was swept away. She had two sons, and they, too, were intrusted with the truth and certain written proofs of it. So the line descended. It branched away from the lake, and I have studied it elsewhere. Some of its branches are lost; there is only one that is clear to the present day. One of its members was a bishop in Guadalajara one hundred and fifty years ago; another died fighting a corn insurrection in the city of Zacatecas near the end of the last century. As the line descended, the written secret, with its gradual accumulation of added proof, descended with it, cherished fondly to the death of its every member. Fourteen years ago the only living representative was a woman of twenty years. She was beautiful. Her blood was pure as the blood of the old emperors. Not one taint of the Spaniard had entered the line. She had the bearing, the untouched strength of mind, and the will of royalty."

The speaker sighed, shaded his face with his hand, and paused.

"Well, she bore a son," he continued, "and died."

The boy was trembling from head to foot. He arose and seized the other's hand, half in a curious frankness, half in agitation.

"Am I the boy?" he cried.

"You are the boy."

The weight of it fell on Vicente then, and he could say no more. His face was gray-brown, and he again sat down.

"Her secret was intrusted to me," said the hermit.

"She knew the church to be against the folly of Hidalgo. She knew the Dominican monastery at Guadalajara to be in favor of royalty. She had no grown member of the family to whom to intrust the secret, and you were too young. And—I had been a friend to her. So she died, leaving it to me. Two of my brother monks were told, and it was decided that if the time came to help you to your own, your old rights and the old rights of the church at once might be restored. It was agreed that, to a certain age, you should be raised among the common people, that you might know them. I was leaving then the monastery, even that little of the world I was putting behind me. I carried you to this lake and thence to Chapala, and gave you to Francisco and to Julia. Yesterday word came to me from the Chapala priest and the monastery that Julia was dying. Then, too, the time is coming. So I went and brought you. I had paid Francisco much to keep you. I had to pay him more to get you away without disturbance, for he wanted you to help him with his fishing boats. Ha! ha!" The laugh was grim. "Fishing boats! As the Christ said on the borders of a lake like this: 'Come, I will make you a fisher of men!'"

There was another long pause, and the boy, scarcely able to sit, tingling in every nerve, waited.

"The least touch of the match," continued his companion slowly, "is sufficient to raise a revolution in this inflammable land. It needs the strong hand of a rightful king to hold it in its proper course. I say again, the people are ready for you. You are to say whether or not you will make yourself ready for them. If you tell me yes, you shall be taken to-morrow night—rather to-night, for it must be already day—to the monastery at Guadalajara. You will

be cared for, educated, trained there by careful hands. And you will be taught the world you are to conquer. I brought you here, first because this is half the distance to the spot on the shore where a horseman will meet you to carry you thither; second, because here my purposes as to your destinies took unchangeable shape; third, because here, locked in the ground, I keep the proofs, and I am going to intrust them to you. I wanted you to carry through all your life the memory of this night, the picture of this place, and the face of this lonely old man, that you may know the life and the secrecy that guards your destiny. For child, child," and his voice was unsteady, "your destiny is mine."

The hand that had again shaded his face was taken away.

"Tell me if you are ready. Your people were driven from their Eden and made to toil and sweat three hundred years in bondage. Come. I will lead you back that you may see again the cherubim and the flaming sword that turneth every way and know again where is your race's tree of life."

The boy arose impassioned, fell on his knees beside the hermit, and clasped him as he would have clasped a father.

"I will do it. Help me, oh Holy Mary!"

To this the hermit replied nothing, nor did he touch the youth with his hands. A look that was a mixture of daring and of fear, and, too, of some stronger passion, flooded his face as he stared at the kneeling figure. When the boy arose he said:

"You will think of it long and deeply."

He too was on his feet, going in scarcely concealed agitation to the entrance.

"Sleep there," he said, pointing to the couch,

and went out of the low door and closed it behind him.

To Vicente, wrought to the highest strain of emotion, it seemed for a moment that with the thud of the closing door he must awake from his dream. He sat down on the cot and watched the wavering halo round the candle's flame. His gaze followed the rays and rested on the shelf with the bread and the bottle, on the table with the books, and on the unspeaking stones of the walls. He lay down at full length, his eyes again on the halo. He had hardly done so when he fell asleep. He slept profoundly, dreamlessly, for twelve hours.

CHAPTER III

IT was the opening of the door that awoke him. He started up with a cry and saw the old man standing at the bedside, a fresh candle in his hand. Of the white light of the hermit's face, there was no abatement. The latter then talked to the youth again for an hour, in that same low, convincing, compelling tone, now standing before him fastening on him his eyes, now walking with long strides to and fro the length of the little cell. His form seemed taller, as though it straightened with the inspiration of his words. There was nothing left unsaid. The pitiable plight of the nation, the duty of a king, the future — these were the themes, rendered solemn, sweet, glorious by a measured eloquence calculated to impress even an older and a less emotional heart than Vicente's. He stopped at last in the middle of his walking and turned abruptly on the boy.

"Are you ready?" he cried.

The listener had wakened with every nerve on the alert. He had drunk every word. He now stood up with every drop of his blood bounding in his veins.

"I am ready," said he.

The hermit went to the shelves, took away the stones at their back, and drew out two small packages.

"These are the proofs," he told the boy, putting one into his hand. "You will keep them forever,

and learn to read them. And this," giving him the other, "is a little money. You will need but little now. In the time to come you will not forget the tomb from which you are to receive the rest."

"Why is it a tomb at all?" suddenly asked the boy, half daring, half childishly frank. "And why did you leave the monastery instead of staying to teach me yourself, and why are you buried here?"

"Asked like a king of his subject," mused the hermit.

Saying no more, he went to the door and, opening it, stood for a moment looking up and out. No light of day penetrated to the cell. The boy reasoned as to the hour. It must be night again. Presently the servant came down the steps and in. He bore a basket which he put upon the floor. The boy was again struck with his peculiar appearance. The scar gave to his face an expression partly devilish, partly foolish. His eyes and forehead bespoke intelligence. His manner was that of the defeated, even the cowed. He went out.

"Eat," said the hermit.

The youth found wine, bread, beans, and fruit in the basket. He ate heartily, drank some wine, and stood up again looking his benefactor fearlessly in the eye.

"I am ready to go now," he said briefly.

The hermit again opened the door; the servant came nearly to the entrance and stood waiting on the steps in the shadows outside.

Vicente approached those shadows. His benefactor took his hand and pressed it so that it ached, saying:

"Boy, your soul is your mother's soul, and your destiny is beyond even a hermit's dreams."

The speaker wheeled away, plainly agitated. He went to the farthest side of the cell, crying strangely, with his back to the youth:

"Go! Leave me! Leave me!"

In the doorway Vicente turned.

"I only want to be sure of one thing," said he, "if you will promise it to me."

The old man wheeled again and waited.

"I want the priest in Chapala to teach Clarita to read," said the boy.

"It shall be done," was the reply, "and in return I shall exact this promise of you. You are never to seek this spot again till it seeks you. You are never to inquire its location. No curiosity, no motives good or bad, are to lead you to search for me till I have called you. If you never so much as hear of me till your throne be established you are not to think it strange. Simply in silence trust me, believe that I have reason and know my course, and seek not to unearth this tomb, lest its power to help you fail. Will you promise me this?"

"I promise it," said the boy, and went out.

He was just outside the door. His gray-brown face, lit with determination, a face so much lighter than that of the slavish figure behind him, seemed to stand out of the gloom. With a sudden sound like a sob the hermit strode across the cell and seized him violently in his arms.

"The face," cried he, "the face too!"

And he kissed the face with passion, pushed the boy away, and turned into the cell again, shutting the door behind. The last impression Vicente had of his features was the impression of suddenly increased wrinkled age.

The servant and the boy went out together, the

servant leading. They passed over the soft mold and under the long arched roof. They came out of the tunnel's broken end and climbed the piles of fallen stones. The sound of small waves, dashing on the rocks, came suddenly up and the night wind struck them. Over the stony way they had come they descended to the water and the boat was rocking at the shore. The night was much as the previous one had been, starlit; and the waves were no higher than before. They entered the boat; it was pushed off, rowed round some points of rock, and headed away into the dim lake. After a little time the sail was hoisted, the boatman sat in the stern with the sail's ropes, and the boy sat at the prow. What dreams, what slow unrolling scenes, what fears and hopes and dazzling promises, were in the brain, then, of him whose disposition since his earliest childhood had been the dreamer's,—him to whom the waves breaking on the beach, the sunset with its myriad clouds of intensely colored light and its circle of flaming mountains, the nets and the children tumbled together on the sand, the care of the only mother he had known, all had held a cause of visions and of loneliness, a meaning, a promise? In a sense the boy died as he crossed the waters on that night, and the man was born, young as he was. But the man knew nothing and must learn.

An hour passed as silently as had been the journey on the night before. He began to wonder who could be the figure that sat so motionless in the stern. From wondering this, he pictured his face. The youth's imagination cast that visage constantly up, exaggerated and distorted it. For many minutes it refused to be put down. It seemed to speak pain, agony, crime; or it was mocking all these. The boy

grew intensely nervous and the first fear that he had felt since he left the Chapala beach came on him, now that the strong influence of the hermit was removed. He could not bear the silence. He found perspiration starting from his forehead.

"Who are you?" he suddenly cried aloud.

There was no answer. The waves lapped the boat's sides, and the wind swayed the sail and blew his hair round his face. There seemed no doubt the man was a mute. His imagined features hung before the boy for many minutes yet. The latter heard, then, the dashing of waves behind him to the right. He had not watched their course, nor looked ahead during the last hour. He turned, and another shore and other rocks rose behind him. Another moment the sail was down; a little longer and the boat was run skilfully aground on a space of beach, three yards in length, left by an opening amidst boulders.

Only vaguely had Vicente till now realized his absolute ignorance of that spot of shore to which the hermit had led him. Now as he leaped out it broke on him with full force. In all the lake's one hundred miles of length, two hundred and fifty miles of circuit, where was the cell? And this spot, too, where was it? They could not have crossed the lake in two hours. They must have crossed, thought he, merely a bay, sailing from one rocky point to the arm opposite. He knew of no such bay. They might be at the extreme western end of the lake where it narrows. He had but a moment to puzzle over this, for two horsemen and a third riderless horse came along the beach over a stony trail. One of them brought a basket and gave it to the mute, who, putting it and himself in the boat, lay down there, doubtless waiting

for a turn of the wind before retracing his course. The other horseman dismounted and gave the third animal to the boy.

"The hermit has intrusted you to us," he said, without preface. "To the monastery. Come!"

Vicente mustered his courage. A new, half-savage delight, such as the boy feels in reading of strange adventures, took possession of him. But the reality of it, and the weight and purpose of it never left him. He mounted, and they rode away. The rocks clinked under them. They ascended a low knoll, and came by a single path to an opening between peaks where they rose higher and higher to the connecting ridge, and then descended again to a valley. They struck a wider road after a time, and spurred on. For hours the horses were urged to an almost incredible speed. The boy was strong and tough as his Indian fathers, and he rode well. Mountains loomed to the right and the left, were passed and sunk into the shadows. Others rose to the front, and were passed too. Here a heavy gate was opened and closed in silence, and a tiny earthen hut stood alone in the wide stretch. Mesquit bordered the way for miles, and dried streams, waiting thirsty for the summer rains, made ruts that the horses leaped. The men spoke but little, and only of the way, the hour, and the speed of the journey. Vicente, with all his youthful vigor, was at last sore and weary when, there being still no light of dawn visible in the sky, they came to the outlying huts of the city of Guadalajara, passed them, and entered its streets of cobblestone.

They did not pass through the city's centre, but merely made a circuit in some of the outskirts. They were in the regions where the streets become roads into the dusty country, when they stopped at the

monastery walls. One of his companions dismounted at a double door that was twelve or fifteen feet in height and a good ten broad. The wall itself rose high and massive, and extended seemingly a long distance. It inclosed unseen grounds and the buildings. The dismounted man knocked with vigor by an iron knocker. A porter pushed back the grating of a little window, and there was some conversation. The door swung open and the three entered and were closed in, the ponderous timbers giving out a deep thud. The porter lay down on the ground, and the riders and their horses, finding themselves in a wide, bare court that surrounded edifices, crossed it, and, under these second walls, circled the monastery.

The boy had nearly lost his sense of direction, when they were halted again at another door. They were all dismounted now, and after another knocking a monk came out and led the horses away, saying nothing. One of Vicente's companions left him, the other led him in. The passages were stone and cold, and they came into an inner *patio*, square-columned, open to the starlit sky, save where trees made the gloom deeper. Another passage and another *patio*; and yet a third passage and a third *patio*. Everywhere were silence and darkness. At length in the fourth court, larger than the others, where a fountain played, there was a ray of light. It issued from a cell under the roof of a columned *corredor*. To the partly open door of this they went and knocked. The prior came out, and with him the boy was left.

The prior brought a candle, whose light fell softly over his black robes and over the sunken, colorless skin of his face. He led the way to a fifth court, and as they passed the fountain the candle-light fell on an iron stand which held a book of unwieldy size chained

to it by an iron chain. Vicente followed. The place took the bounding life out of his veins. As they approached the cell that should be his, home-sickness swept over him like pain, and the hut on the Chapala sands was before his eyes. In the cell, bare and rude enough, yet with a bed on which he could sleep himself into enthusiasm again, the prior put down the candle. To this monk there was subject of profound interest in the slight, lost figure before him. He looked into the boy's face, scrutinizing it. Then he blessed him, with his hand on his head.

"All will be well," said he.

He went away and shut the child in.

The outer walls that inclosed the monastery grounds extended four hundred yards in each direction; they were twenty feet high. In the hundreds of years of Spanish rule in Mexico the church acquired vast tracts of land and built vast edifices. A later policy has swung back the secret doors and made public the cloister, and in many cities walls like these still stand, but inclose barracks, hospitals, prisons. In former days these squares held the great strength of the land, and out of their secrecy and their silence issued who knows what arms of power?

When that outer door shut the boy in, it was not to open again for him, nor was he so much as to see the world, for six long months. Indeed he never became wholly free from the influence of the place, and the day when he finally left it for the last time was to be a day of much meaning.

It shall not be the purpose of this narrative to relate the workings of that power by which the church, in so many countries and so many ages, has molded its agents and brought about its ends. Infinite patience seems to have been its watchword.

Let months and years count for nothing. Do not act till the time is ripe. If the long, long care and building of one set of the church's servants do not finish the task, this is nothing. These being dead the next shall take it up. Be there born in the heart of Rome, or in that of a dependency of Rome, a purpose, it shall be deathless. Rome shall bury haste, she shall hug the secret, she shall cover the egg for years, for centuries if she must, till it hatch.

Weight and gloom oppressed the boy for two months. He scarcely left his cell. The depth of the purpose should be given time to sink, slowly, deeply, into his very soul. Who, inexperienced, can depict the effect of the cloister on the spirit of a boy? His, and they saw it plainly and joyed in it, was too strong to break. It took in seriousness. He fasted and saw few of the monks. The prior's sunken features and eyes of keen life were much with him. He was led slowly, coldly, in the way of his future. He walked, on rare occasions, like a small, silent ghost, through the corridors and the many *patios*, where the trees reflected the sun and the fruit hung yellow. He talked a little with the figures about him. He learned, at first, almost nothing concerning them. They had their cells, their refectory, their chapel. There seemed to be unlimited numbers of them, but the place was so large there were seldom more than a few together, yonder at the fountain, here in the court, passing there under the shadows of the columns, or chanting at the altar. The *patios*, he learned, were twenty-three. The chapel was exactly in the centre. And wherever he turned, were walls, walls, walls. The prior taught him many things, solemnly. There were many conferences over his welfare of which he knew nothing.

It was gradually explained to him how, to know the world and to realize the meaning of his destiny, it was best first to drink the dregs of bitterness here. Later, said they, he should not be bound by the ceremonies as were they. He should be taught, and should learn to be freer than they. But now —

So he fasted, he prayed, he walked in gloom. No element of the boy was allowed to show itself. He was, for the time, a monk, young as he was. If he did not understand it he did not, at first, question. He was dumb. Many a sick hour his brain revolted and would show him nothing but Clarita, the lake, the woman who had been faithful as his mother. But his outdoor, vigorous spirit, though dormant, was unable to be crushed. Other days his dreams of old came back, and the mystic in him roused and responded to these gloomy walls, these stone passages, these trees and fountains. Toward the two months' end he grew unendurably weary of this cloister life. The Aztec blood in him was too pure. They found him one day, when they had left him in the deepest gloom, leaping the stones of the fountain with a wild freedom like a panther. They took counsel together. The meaning of his own future had not sufficiently sunk into his understanding. So a monk, one he had learned to hate (though there were many he respected and a few he loved) came to his cell, whither he had slunk away abashed.

"You must scourge yourself," said he solemnly, and held up the scourge.

There was a deep vein in his own nature, of the existence of which the boy had till then been ignorant. His blood boiled. He was like an enraged king. He scarcely knew what he did. Scourge himself — like the lowest? They had done much with him.

He had submitted for weeks. He had desired to submit and had put the boy's spirit down and tried to learn. He had suffered, feared, wept. He had grown thin and weak. The eyes that glared suddenly on the priest were sunken eyes. He knew in that moment who he was.

"I am no monk!" he shrieked, and, springing toward his visitor, seized the scourge from his hand and brought it hissing through the air, straight across the other's face. The monk beat a precipitate and scandalized retreat, his cheek bleeding. He cried blasphemy for many a day. The boy shrank trembling into a corner, rage and remorse combating in him.

It was a question for the prior to settle, and the prior was old and worldly-wise, despite the cloister. He chuckled to himself over the matter, which he seemed to weigh with solemnity. It proved to him that the boy's nature was a nature to be feared. It was time, said he, that a little more liberty should be granted, and his education should be begun and vigorously pursued. So Vicente was reprimanded only. Then he was led out to the big book chained in the *patio*.

"This is the Bible," said the prior. "The common people should not read it, but you, you are to be taught to read, not only this, but many other things."

The monks took him in hand, and the lessons of all kinds began. They found him apt. The monk he had scourged did not approach him, but frowned from a distance with bandaged cheek. Even yet they fed the boy but little. But he wanted little. And many hardships were put upon him. He was given, after his studies, heavy labor; but he preferred it to idleness.

At the end of the half year they sent him out on certain days, like Luther of old, to beg in the streets. They wanted him, too, to learn the city and the customs of its people. So he scudded through the narrow ways, begging his bread, dressed in the habit of the cloister. He prowled into every nook and corner of the town. He was many a time lonely and sad and wandered on, even in the night, to drown his restlessness. The people of some streets grew to know the face of the boy, a face thin but strong, gray-white, unlike the more ordinary Mexican face. The main plaza in the town's centre was haunted by him. The deep cathedral bells seemed to him to find echo in the emotions of his heart, in its memories, its capacity for love, its loneliness and its hopes. He wandered under the plaza's trees and among its flowers. He went under the cathedral's pointed towers and into its doors. The mass was solemn to him; but there was one thing strange in his conduct. He would not kneel. They had noticed this long and with pain in the monastery chapel. They had prayed with him, exhorted him, threatened him, punished him. He had listened to it all. He had not defied them; he had not seemed rebellious. He had meditated on it and made no reply. They had watched his eyes and pale face, and, puzzled, left him. He would not kneel.

He learned, in the time that then passed, to read. He had learned a little of the Chapala priest. The prior brought him such books as were calculated to inspire him, histories of his people and their wrongs, works relating to kings and their rights, treatises on the divine origin of the church and its legitimate power. In his sixteenth and seventeenth year in particular, these books and many more absorbed

him. Also, he went much to the chained volume by the fountain. The Old Testament was his favorite. He read it as another boy reads a fairy-tale. He dreamed over it, lay awake thinking of it, arose with his nerves in tension in the middle of the night and carried his candle to it and read. The books seemed to have changed him more than all else. He became more silent, meditative, self-contained, as though he felt a power grown in him. He had the look and the manner of one much older than he. One night he found in the chained book a passage that had failed to strike him before. He recalled that the hermit had quoted it. He carried it, after that, till the day of his death, in his heart.

“And he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

Needless to say, long since had he devoured the contents of those proofs of his lineage which the hermit had submitted to him. He read them over and over. He kept them locked away in safety save when he took them out to pore over them yet again. The proof was there, clear and indisputable back to the old time, and every letter of it he learned by heart — his mother's epistle written in a fine, peculiar hand and ending with a passionate appeal to her child, then unborn — the preceding documents extending back, older and yellower; among them that of him who had been killed in Zacatecas and whose involved sentences embodied a curiously quaint dream of the imperial future — the crisp statement of facts written one hundred and fifty years before by the Guadalajara bishop, who trusted his cause to the Virgin — finally, the irregular piece of sheepskin, doubtless from some flock of Chapalac's shore, whereon were

the unfading hieroglyphics of the old prince, relating his wanderings. This last the boy carried always with him. It was like a talisman that brought to him the help of those warrior spirits who had been as royal as Montezuma's self.

The time was approaching when the monks intended sending him back, for a year, to his people, to study them more thoroughly, to be in touch with their interests, to wander all the lake region over and be a part of it; then again to return for the final training and the final wait till the opportune moment for the blow.

CHAPTER IV

CLARITA had not forgotten him. If the fishers knew where he was they did not tell her. She was too little at first to know how to question. After months, during which she rarely heard his name, she lost all disposition to question. But her life was not what it should have been. She still lived in the hut with Francisco; and Anastasio, his tall, lean fellow-fisherman, had come to live with them. What care she received was little more than to be hastily fed, and, for the rest, to take care of herself. She played with the children on the sand, or went wandering with the enterprising Pepa up St. Michael's sides over the town. She had in her an unexpressed longing for better care, and she remembered Vicente and held him in her heart.

She grew pretty as she grew older — not a beauty like Pepa's. Pepa's eyes learned to flash at eight years of age. There was freedom, grace, daring, in Pepa's very carriage. She did naughty things, too, and all the village knew her. If she was punished by her mother at the inn she cried out that when Vicente came to marry her, he would punish her mother too and the whole fishing town. She also remembered the boy, but she had so many other things in her lively, scintillant brain, that the memory gradually grew vague. With Clarita it was different. She was quieter; her prettiness was modest,

subdued. Her hair was oddly auburn, and when she washed it in the lake on Saturdays and dried it in the sunny breeze, it glistened like gold; which gold Pepita mingled with her black tresses, let the wind wrap the two of them in the combined mesh, and ran off laughing with Clarita held round her slim body by Pepita's strong young arm, both girls barefoot.

Francisco was cruel at times, and loud and boisterous always. He did not understand the child and little cared. So she did not love him. She loved nobody there, unless it were Pepita, whose spirit was too wild for her. She sat on the sand under a huge *salati* tree that stood by the shore, and, though she did not think it, her little heart was crying for something beyond. She thought at those times under the wild fig's great branches of the brother she had romped with, the brother who had carried her on his shoulders, tumbled her in the sand, eaten and slept with her, and disappeared across the lake in the night. When she was eight the priest came and arranged that he should teach her. He explained to her that Vicente had exacted the promise. She had not heard the name for months. Her blood leaped up and her face, not a very dark one, flushed with an eager blush, and the growing dimples in her cheeks were suddenly deep.

"Where is he?" she said, half afraid to ask.

"He has gone away to learn, too, but he will come back."

She was only bewildered at this. But she asked no more. His memory was the only thing of reality and happiness in her life; he had wanted her to learn, and she would learn. That one past wish of the boy's was enough for all her heart and its affections to tie to.

She was nine years old when she went once with the fishermen to the city market with the fish. Some of the men went early every Thursday morning, that Guadalajara's market might be full of fish for Friday. The fishers clubbed together for this and took turns in going, two making the journey for all. Pepa had already gone more than once. She had run off to go. She used to own a burro of her own, and if the men would not permit her to ride between the baskets on theirs, she rode hers. Alas ! the growing, high-spirited, reckless Pepita cost her wrinkled-faced mother at the *meson* many a night's sleep. Clarita would not do as she. When it came Francisco's turn she begged to go. It was rarely he let her do anything like that; but he let her now.

Francisco, Anastasio, and Fortino the big, circled out on the lake in the little boat all night, dropping the meshes of the long net. They drew its two ends then to the beach, and pulled in the net's circle, using both hands and feet, till the white fish wriggled on the sand. This was repeated till three o'clock of Thursday morning. Then they piled the fish in tall cylindrical baskets among wet banana leaves with wet banana leaves over the top to keep them cool. The burros were driven out of a lot behind the hut, and came stupidly. The baskets were roped to them, one on either side of each burro. Then Clarita was awakened, arose from the earthen floor, put on her little long dress of pink cotton and her blue *rebozo*, and came rubbing her eyes. By lantern light on the beach Anastasio's long arm hoisted her to a burro's back, and she sat high up perched between the two guarding baskets, with her feet out on the burro's neck. Then the journey began, and Fortino — he who had carried her mother's coffin away on his

shoulder—was left with the nets. Francisco and Anastasio walked behind the burros (there were five of them), beating them with sticks, and making the journey, so nearly as possible, a lively one.

They went for hours thus over stony ways, and were climbing the ridge that stretched between mountains when the sun came up. They stopped on the ridge's summit, with all the great lake spread out like a silver jewel in its porphyry boundary of peaks behind, the sun reflected in it, and the valley and its trail to Guadalajara to the front. The girl leaped down, and they made a fire of brush on the ground and warmed beans and ate *tortillas*. Then they were away again, and noon found them half the distance to the city. Dinner at one was like the breakfast, and the stream they ate it by was tiny and poor, for it was in March,—a season warm enough here, but dry. Clarita mounted again in silence, dust on her dress and on her auburn hair, and the animals were beaten on.

"What would you do, Anastasio," cried Francisco, in a speculative vein, "if you had a thousand dollars?"

Anastasio, the chief characteristic of whose attenuated body was laziness, whistled slowly as though the sum were not comprehensible.

"I'd just sit down on the shore," drawled he, "and let them bring me *tequila* from the first day of January round to the last day of December, leaving out Guadalupe day, and San Francisco day, and a few more *fiestas*, when they could make it *pulque*."

"Ha! ha!" shouted Francisco, as though it were a joke of great refreshing qualities. "But after a day you would n't be in a condition to drink it!"

"Then they could just set it around on the sand till I came to," drawled Anastasio.

"I never saw the amount," mused the other,

dreamily. "The most I ever had — well, you know when it was — when they paid me," with a wink at the girl, who was on the second burro to the front, "to keep him, you know."

"And you spent it infernally regularly. Yours was a great deal. Pay you for taking him, pay you for keeping him, and you made them pay you for taking him away. Francisco," continued the drawling fisherman, swinging himself all the while lazily along, and towering far over six feet in lank height, "Francisco, the mother of God will reward you."

"If I could only sell him again," sighed Francisco, breaking into a roar after the sigh, "the reward would be greater!"

Clarita's burro chancing to lag at that moment, they came to her side. There were tears in the child's eyes, and when Francisco uttered a harsh exclamation at the sight, she sobbed. They whipped the burro up, and she was trotted on, her little bare feet sticking out on the animal's neck, her body perched straight between the two great baskets, and the tears running slowly down her cheeks.

It was eight o'clock at night and dark when they came to the city. They entered an inn, or *meson*, for the poorer classes. It was low and large and square, built about an open, stone-paved court where many burros waited. The fish being at once disposed of to market-men in tall sombreros and red blankets, the fishermen and the girl went into a dirty dining-room where some were eating round a rude table and some were squatted on the floor. A cook brought them eggs, and the inevitable *tortillas*, and some fried pork from charcoal fires that burned in pot-like *braseros*.

A half hour later the child, lonely, unhappy, was

put to bed with some women in a bare room with a blank white wall, brick floor, and matting for a bed. She fell asleep. The next morning the sound of rockets awakened her. She started up in dread. The sound brought over her the misery of that night long ago when her mother died. She thought she was to be torn again from Vicente. She found instead that it was a feast day, and all the city was in a giddy mood. Francisco was calling her. There were to be bands in the plaza, a saint carried with great procession and pomp through all the streets, illimitable amounts of *tequila* drunk, and, at night, "castles" and wheels in fireworks. In the restaurant were crowds of men and women. The men's white clothing was all spotlessly clean, and the women were in bright colors. Their shouting and laughing bewildered the child, and *gorditas* and *chicharrones* and many another fried and sputtering thing sizzled on the charcoal fires. She could not eat. Francisco and Anastasio had already taken some liquor, and they were as happy as was possible for Mexicans to be on a gala day. They had the money for the fish.

"More *tequila*!" whined Anastasio. "I am so long, brothers. It takes so much to get to the bottom of me. Friends, I can always feel it drying up on the road down, and my stomach is left whistling."

"Then it will have whistled music enough for a cock-fight before night. Ha! ha!" cried Francisco. "Come on!"

They were out and away to the plaza, Clarita, her blue *rebozo* over her head, following them dumbly, forgotten. The narrow streets were full of gay colors and the shops were crowded. The *cantinas* were fullest of all. Round the plaza were the low-arched

portales under whose continuous shade the people promenaded. The trees swung golden fruit in the morning breeze, the flowers spoke all colors, and the pointed cathedral towers rose high against the deep blue of the Mexican heavens. There was a band playing, and the girl, lost in its melodies, wandered nearer and nearer it.

It was all strange to her, half awing, half fascinating her. She had watched the crowds for an hour, moving slowly here and there, and a great yellow flower that had swung over her head was just falling to the ground at her feet, plucked by the wind, when she remembered that she had not heard the loud jests of her father and his companion for some time. She was alone and grew terrified. She ran from the plaza to the arches of the *portales*, not knowing why nor whither. As she ran she caught sight of a figure in black, passing among the many brilliant colors of the thronged street. She paused, she stopped. She knew not whether her terror increased or abated. The face of the figure had been toward her but a moment; the figure itself was passing on. She would have cried out, but could not. She was in one instant back in the days of her infancy. She would have run after the black figure, but this too she could not do. She was fixed to the spot. She saw it going away, turning the corner by the cathedral, walking slowly as though in a reverie — and it was gone.

After many minutes she was able to decide which was the street by which they had come from the *meson*. She entered it and trudged on, her *rebozo* fallen to her shoulders. She was sick and full of weariness. She entered the *meson* unseen, crept into the room where the matting was, and crouched in a corner on it. She was trembling. She stayed there

all day, the music, the rockets, the noise of the procession when they carried the gaudy saint along the street, failing to draw her out. As for Francisco and Anastasio, they were happy enough, without thought of her, without intention of returning home till the festivities should be done. *Tequila* is a good thing with which to silence care. They did not return to the *meson* till nearly night. They entered at last in mood half maudlin, half boisterous.

"A little more *tequila*, mother," muttered Anastasio to the woman in the restaurant. "It has — it has got — nigh to the bottom."

Francisco, suddenly remembering, went to look for the child. She was not there.

The day's gloom and loneliness had produced their fruit. She was not all timidity and she had had time to think and feel. She felt sure she had seen the only human being she loved, the only one that loved her. She had been neglected all her life, neglected and cruelly treated to-day. She wanted him — she could bear it no more without him. Toward evening she crept out of the *meson* again and ran swiftly, recklessly to the plaza, covering her face with her blue *rebozo*, and arrived breathless at the cathedral. She hung about its great iron gates for an hour, hardly daring to hope. Many figures came out and went in, some of them in black. None was he. At last, when the red sunset was in the sky and over the street, the biggest of the bells boomed out over her head.

Then she saw him, slighter than the other black figures, graceful, to her beautiful. He was coming out, though the rest were now going in, and she saw his face plainly. She had been a tiny thing when they took him away, and years had passed. But she

would have known him anywhere in all the world. She saw his face more plainly still. It had never been so white as this in days gone by. It had never been so thin nor the eyes so deep. She was terrified anew at the change in him, terror mixed with ecstasy. She did not run to him. She stood holding to the iron of the gate, staring at his eyes. He was a yard from her, looking at the ground and not seeing her, when she uttered a wild, harsh cry:

"Vicente! Vicente!"

He turned, surprised, looked, caught her up, and held her sobbing against his breast.

He was alarmed yet delighted to have her. He walked with her, at first in silence, into one of the narrow streets where the seclusion was more marked. There he put her down.

"Oh, Clarita!" he cried, "where did you come from — why are you here?"

She was here to find him, and she told him so, and she never wanted to go back, clinging to his hand with all her dimples out and the blushes there too, the auburn hair blowing about her face and the happiness returned.

Where did he go? Where did they take him? Where was he now? She would go too — oh! might n't she, might n't she stay with him?

"Have they treated you ill?" asked he, looking down at her pityingly. She felt again that his face was changed. It was more serious, the eyes larger and darker.

She told him they had left her here in the streets and she had run back to the inn and crouched on the floor all day. Could n't she stay with him — please, oh! could n't she stay with him?

He bit his lips and there was red blood in his very

forehead. His anger at Francisco was boiling in him. Had they begun to teach her to read?

"Oh yes, the padre teaches me, and I came yesterday with the fish. Oh! can't I stay with you?"

"No, Clarita," he replied, and was lost in a sudden reverie. Then he continued as though the decision had but then swept over him. "But I am coming, little sister, and soon. Look at me. I promise to come back."

He seemed wrapped in the meditation of his purpose after that, and walked on, holding the child's hand. She gripped his as though never to loosen it, and trudged with him. She was terribly afraid he would send her back. His black clothing and his silent manner filled her with something like reverence. For the mere idea of Vicente had ever been to her an idea of all that was beyond her poor little life.

He walked faster and faster, dreaming and holding her hand. He came to the monastery walls and suddenly stopped.

"Clarita," he said, "I promise to come back to you. And when I come I will explain all, why I went away, and the thing that I am going to do. You are going on, and must study as I wanted you to. You will be able, by and by, to understand me. And, under the *salati* tree I am coming to talk it over with you, there by the lake where we played. Francisco does not know what he does. I shall teach him to treat you better. And now, because it is not permitted that you enter here, you must go back with him."

She could make no reply to this. She simply raised her *rebozo* to her head and wrapped herself in it, humbly obeying. To stay was all her thought—but he said to go. It was nearing dusk and the hour

had arrived when the gendarmes of the day on the street corners were being changed for those of the night. One of the latter, ready for his watch, passed them under the monastery walls, with his lantern. He took his station at a corner, and the other, whom he relieved, came walking by.

Vicente had observed this latter gendarme before, had even addressed him at times. He was a very young man, probably not yet twenty-one. He was a little over medium height with broad shoulders, graceful and athletic figure. The uniform sat well on him.

"Señor!" called Vicente.

The other came up. Vicente explained to him that the child, his sister, had come with the fishers from the lake, that she had lost her way and that he wanted the officer to take her back to the inn. The gendarme had won a secret confidence in him long since by his quiet, firm doing of his duty. Clarita was given into his charge and Vicente offered him a piece of money. The other looked at it, shrugged his shoulders, and smiled.

"No," said he. "I dare say the child will pay enough in herself. Pay for a pleasure — a happiness in the gloom? Ah, not so, my friend. Come, little one, we'll have you back."

She turned to Vicente, who caught her up again.

"Clarita, I promise to come. Go back to the lake and wait for me."

So, with her hand in the gendarme's and her head turned round to her brother's retreating figure, she left him.

"And what is the lake like?" asked the gendarme.

She had said nothing and not seemed to know he was there. She looked up suddenly. She had not

noticed before that he was different from other men. His face was white, at least white to her, though it was doubtless tanned. But she always remembered it as white. His hair, too, where it could be seen under his gendarme's cap, was not black and straight. It was dark brown and waving. His eyes were dark, though, like hers, nearly as dark as Vicente's. He spoke her language a little oddly too. She did not know what it meant when one pronounced his words in that manner. She forgot to reply — thinking again of Vicente. Vicente would come; Vicente would come!

"Is the lake beautiful? Are there mountains there and are the towns big?"

"Not big like this," said she.

"Mountains?"

Yes, there were mountains.

"Tell me about it. What do you do? What kind of a place? What do they call your town?"

"Chapala. It is a little place."

"Are the people all like you? Ah — tell me they are like you!" He was looking at her auburn hair.

She did not understand this.

"Oh no. They are mostly bigger," said she. "Fortino is very big."

"Are there any of them white?" he asked with much sudden intensity.

She threw a quick look at his face. There was some mystery about whiteness to her. No, said she, Vicente was the whitest she knew.

"And what do you do there?"

"They fish there."

"Are the nets big and white, and are there boats?"

"Oh yes; they are very, very long, and they stretch them out on the sand to dry and we play

out there." She was growing interested and he won confidence.

"What do you play?"

"Well, if it is moonlight, while they fish we play on the sand."

"And who are we?"

"Pepa and I. It used to be Vicente, but they —" She could not speak of that, and stopped.

"Who is Pepa?"

"She is another girl."

"Is her hair like yours?"

"No, it is black. We wash it in the lake on Saturdays, and we climb the mountain and can see right down into the *patios* of the houses."

"Is the lake very big and beautiful?"

"Oh yes."

He sighed deeply and walked on in silence.

"Are there gendarmes there?" said he.

"Oh there is a *jefe politico* there and some of his men."

Silence again, then:

"Why," he muttered, "God knows it would suit me. The farther away the better. If it is like you, little girl, it ought to be balm indeed. I think I can feel the breeze and see the sunset already. Heigh-ho! to be where all is fresh, new, untouched — and to forget. Little girl, you are so eloquent a pleader of your native shores that I fain would go!"

They came to the inn.

"This is it," said she subdued, and started in, leaving him with no ceremony, afraid of Francisco.

"Good-by!" he called.

She turned, startled, remembered the Mexican politeness, and came and shook hands with him gravely. His face was full of real regret at leaving her.

"Good-by. May be I shall come to your lake sometime and see you there — and how much better were there none but you and I! Heigh-ho! Good-by — and back to the shadows."

She remembered him long.

Francisco came in soon, raving, and would have whipped her had not liquor rendered his purposes diffused. She ate *frijoles* and *tortillas* for supper, as always, and went to bed on the matting. "Vicente will come," said she. The castles and wheels of fireworks were duly witnessed by her long since unsteady father and by Anastasio, to the bottom of whom the liquor had now quite descended, much to his satisfaction. They woke her up very early in the morning and the journey was made back to the lake as it had been made to the city. And all the way, jogging along perched between the empty baskets on the burro's back, she said, "Vicente is coming." They arrived at Chapala at night and she was tired and sleepy and went to sleep on the earthen floor. Francisco, Anastasio, and the other fishermen counted the money by candle light. There was not much more than half of it left. But then, yesterday was a feast day; and the half was received sympathetically.

As for Vicente, his purpose was formed. He stated his case plainly to the prior, and, partly because of the imperiousness of his demand, partly because it accorded with the prior's intentions, won the necessary consent. He was nineteen years of age. He had received what was considered, at that time and in that region, a good education. He had read much. He had thought more. He had grown in more ways than one.

The next morning, with the very money in his pocket the hermit had given him (for he had spent

almost none of it) with the understanding that his connection with the monastery continued through the Chapala priest, and that through that circuit more money could be drawn, Vicente, dressed in the clothes of the middle classes and not of the monk, rode out of the city and took the stony way to the mountain lake.

CHAPTER V

OUT of the rocky hills that lie back of Tizapan on the lake's southern side, used to come in those days, to Chapala, a young man of a cold, piercing eye, pointed moustaches, and quick, silent tread like the tread of a cat. He was no peon. He had a widowed mother in Tizapan who might have been called not far from wealthy. She gave him some fruit groves in the hills and tried to tame and make something out of him by letting him manage them. The biggest market on the lake in those days was the Chapala market on the northern shore. So she bought him two *canoas*, and every Saturday afternoon his peons loaded them with fruit and, if he chose (and he generally did, for he loved the water), he came with them, an all night's sail across the lake, to sell on Sunday morning.

Being of a wild turn he had known the whole lake and the mountains that surrounded it since he was able to row and stick to a horse. He knew too much of it. He had a passion for gambling and came home many a time in his youth without his horse, and not infrequently with two or three. He ran off at eighteen years of age to Guadalajara with several hundred dollars he had scraped together. He learned all the games there, and though he lost nearly all his money learning them, he was a sufficiently apt pupil to win it back again. He went to Mexico City too. What times he had had there nobody knew. After

some months Doroteo Quiroz came wandering home without anything. But he had acquired that cat-like tread, his ever ready manner, and a new daring. He took great pride in having the gambler's honor. But he said, with a sigh, that gambling was a ruinous business and he was going to raise fruit. He did raise fruit; but he set up a roulette table in Tizapan, too, and taught other people to play. His eyes, at twenty-two, had that cold, strained, yet often attractive lustre that comes into the eyes of the gamester who has seen wild times. He was grown to be distinctly handsome.

On a certain Sunday morning in summer Doroteo's two flat-bottomed craft, with single square sails spread to a bulging breeze, came sailing across the lake. They had weathered a storm all night, such a storm as only the Chapala rainy season can evolve. The winds and the rain had beaten them, and the waves had cast them about, while streaks of lightning tore the sky. Doroteo had been in it all, save when the rain was hardest, high up on the stern, and had sung a falsetto air to the thunders. The sun was out radiant now, the sails glistened drying, steam rose from the wet planks and the piles of yellow fruit on the bottom, and the waves rocked gently. Chapala's white, twin church towers rose glistening before, under St. Michael's stony head, and Tizapan was not even a speck away across the water to the rear.

"Down with the sails, boys, and up with the poles!" cried Quiroz; and then he sang softly:

"The game was sweet, the game was swift,
And deft that black-eyed Spanish girl.
She staked her love upon the red —
I won it fair at every whirl.
She would not give it me!"

He was leaning on the bow of the larger vessel, and the larger vessel's name was the "Goddess Venus," painted in black letters across the sail. He wore one of those rich sombreros that characterize the Mexican gentleman of the country districts. Its silver bands glistened and its wide brim was embroidered in golden threads. He wore, too, tight trousers of a fine, soft leather, with silver buttons linked with silver chains down the sides to his feet, and above, a short brown jacket of the same material.

The sails came flapping down, and the sailors, with their white cotton drawers rolled to their hips, and their brown legs glistening, walked slowly back and forth on the boats' upper ledges, poling the awkward vessels to the shore. The smaller of the two, called "The Delirium," was brought thus quite to the sandy beach, stern first. The other was too heavily laden and was halted some yards out.

"Now, out with you, boys," cried the owner, "and carry me."

Two peons leaped overboard, and the water rose to their hips. One of them took the rope of the boat; the other received Doroteo's form on broad shoulders and waded with him to the stretch of sand, where he put him down. The stern of the "Goddess" was drawn, by means of the rope, to the prow of the "Delirium," and a means thus formed of unloading her cargo, using the smaller *canoe* as a bridge. There were other *canoes* tossing about, some at the shore, some anchored far out, some sailing in or sailing away, each with its one square canvas glistening. These boats are from twenty-five to sixty feet in length, part of each being covered with a thatched roof. There is one mast. Up and down the rugged path that led past the *salati*-tree into the

street, and thence to the market-place, workmen and strollers passed and repassed, and the fruits of a hundred kinds of trees and the vegetables of many strange plants, the charcoal of distant fires and the wood and stone of distant mountains, went laboriously thither.

"Good morning! Good morning, Don Doroteo!" cried a voice.

He had scarcely been set down. He turned to find at his elbow a slender girl of fifteen years of age.

"Pepa!" he cried, letting his gaze wander slowly over her body, a body coming to maturity with remarkable swiftness. "Why, she's a woman. Eyes of me — she's grown! Dios! let her grow an hour more and she's Venus herself. How in beauty's name did you do it so quickly?"

"She staked her love upon the red —
I'll win it straight at every whirl!"

"No; it is promised," she said, demurely. She wore a red dress. She clapped her hands in a spontaneous exuberance of spirits and cried it repeatedly. "It is promised — it is promised!"

"Promised? Faith, you begin early. Promise at fifteen, break it at sixteen. To whom?"

His men were unloading the fruit. They had piled bags of oranges on the sand. She sat down on them, and talked teasingly:

"To a man. To the handsomest man. To one who has seen everything that there is."

Quiroz's eyes were shining and his moustaches were sticking out with extreme pointedness, his whole handsome face showing a scarcely tamed interest in her.

"He has been, too, to strange places," she con-

tinued, her black eyes dancing. "He is going to wake up the world."

"Good!" said Doroteo. "And neither the world nor he will sleep again, I'll wager them on that, if Pepa Aranja is a part of the play."

There was something half mocking in his tone, and he smiled at her with his lips shut, and then made a dash at her, and would have had her hand, but she leaped up and stood on top of the farthest bag of oranges. The workmen were surrounding her with mangos and *tunas*.

"Touch me if you dare," cried she triumphantly, straightening herself up, "and I shall jump into your *tunas*." The morning breeze was blowing her hair and her skirts about her. There was red blood in her dark face. She was all life, all motion. She answered his smile then with a dazzling one of her own, a smile such as one might travel a thousand miles and never see again; and she followed it with a ringing laugh, and tossed her head. "Oh — when we get it awake, we can keep it awake!" she cried.

"Jump into the *tunas* if you wish," said he, stepping slowly nearer her and speaking low, "but tell me about him. Holy Mary! I may want you myself! You are so alive. Who is he?"

"Don't you know? He went away five years ago, in the night. He came back last spring. He's been all over and all round the lake since then. You know him!"

"Ah," said Quiroz, with much satisfaction. "Vicente. And fortune goes with him." His eyes dilated, and he came close and whispered. "Are you in this big game, too? By the mass, I believe you're capable of secrets and schemes, and the Lord knows what, young as you are. Come. Maybe I'm

in it too. What do you know — that he is going to be — what?"

She grew suddenly long faced.

"I am not that kind — to go telling it," she said, solemnly.

"Pooh! I know it all — and more. He has been in every town since his return, on all the lake's shores, and beyond. Do you fancy I have n't seen him, talked to him, and offered my humble services? And when he begins — oh, Pepa knows it all, eh? — Pepa only! And when he begins, and the wheel spins, Doroteo's future will be staked as well!"

She was wide-eyed at this.

"So," said she, "you know it, too!"

"Why, I can hold my tongue. He told me of you. Doroteo is reckless. Doroteo is bold. He has seen the world — ha! ha! And the game goes on merrily when he spins the wheel. These things Vicente knows, and Doroteo's knowledge of the people and the lake, *si*, and his boldness, *señorita*! Compared to Vicente and — your servant, all other men are — cows!"

He whispered it full of scorn.

"And maybe," continued he, "Doroteo, too, is promised to be in at the waking of the world!"

His face held a secretive, half fierce expression. He twirled his moustaches.

"Dios!" he cried, "to think a girl of fifteen should be a woman — and an oriental beauty!"

Any one but Pepa would have hated his gaze. She laughed at him bewitchingly.

"He will be coming back to Chapala to-day," she cried. "And when he comes — ah," looking the while into Doroteo's eyes mischievously, "compared to him *all other men* are — cows!" She laughed

again in ringing glee, and clapped her hands, and skipped on the orange bags. He sprang toward her.

"Little witch!" cried he, his eyes flaming, "I'll have a kiss out of those red lips for that!"

She was too quick for him. She leaped from the orange bags to one of mangos, and skipped a little again, flushed and with flashing eyes. He was after her there, too, and she sprang up to the low bow of the "Delirium," and laughed at him and stuck out her lips. He was up in an instant, making the single high leap from the ground, strong and swift. But her black hair, flying free, disappeared within under the thatched roof, and her feet made a thud on the boat's flat bottom. She was scrambling over the piles of yellow and red fruit, shouting to him to come on, nigh knocking the peons against the vessel's sides; and he was after her in hot pursuit. She emerged from under the thatch near the boat's pointed prow, and climbed to the boarded space across the front. On this elevated stage over the water she had a moment to turn and laugh at him. Then she jumped across the open between the vessels, and was high up on the lofty stern of the "Goddess Venus."

"I won it fair at every whirl.
She would not give it me!"

she sang breathless.

He was there too, and they scrambled under the second thatched roof. She stood at last higher yet on the slanting prow of the "Goddess." The waters rose and fell, sun-lit, under her, and there was no retreat. She was flushed to her forehead, and put out her lips to him temptingly again, as he came on. He thought he had her then, but he did not know

her. He was jumping up to her exalted perch, when she disappeared over the side. There was a little shriek and a splash, and he saw a red flash swimming away to the shore. She was out on the sand, laughing and shouting defiance to him and running away, dripping with her soiled garments clinging round lithe limbs. She was gone in the upper street, and he lacked his kiss.

Vicente was indeed, at that very time, riding out of Ajicjic, a village on the shore to the west. An hour later he appeared in Chapala, and, shut with Quiroz in a room of the *meson*, held a conference with that active gamester, whom he had long known as daring and intelligent, and whom he had chosen for those qualities, believing the gaming instinct would be no detriment in the day of hazardous deeds. It was then revealed to Quiroz, not altogether to his satisfaction, that the time was not at hand. It was Vicente's decision that some years must yet go by before the blow should be struck. So the two separated, carrying with them certain differing images of the yet distant future.

As for Clarita, Vicente had done all in his power to better her lonely condition. He had been with her as much as possible, but this was little. He had expostulated with and threatened Francisco in behalf of a kinder treatment, and had finally accomplished something by combining these means with money. He had, too, found a woman who would look a little after the child, for the interest of Pepa's mother had been enlisted more strongly in Clarita's favor. But the child was not happy unless Vicente were there. The veil of sadness that nature and circumstances had cast over her from birth, would not lift, save in his presence, and even then it was not so much a lifting

of it as a rendering it sweet. Vicente had come, and she was more nearly happy; she dreaded thinking of the time when he should again leave her for a long period. She studied diligently these days, and when Vicente was there she doubled her lessons, being taught by the priest and her brother too. She never considered him other than her brother.

And the day must come when he would indeed leave her again for long. He passed all these months in a careful study of the people, the country of the lake region, the towns, the mountains. He was, for weeks, unheard of, being yonder on the southern border, or in the western hills, or high up among the mountain planters. He learned the people's thoughts, their ways, and the gauge of their intelligence. He carried with him a manner and a mind serious, thoughtful, full of the time to come. He was received everywhere by the clergy, and taught and encouraged—must it be said?—even blinded by them. They helped him calculate the power of the springs that would move the people. They showed him the effects of past revolutions, the failure of them, the lack of a deep movement which the church alone could arouse. He grew sad at the spectacle of his unhappy land. He fed on dreams of the dead ages when his own blood made an empire here, on hopes of the future when he should establish a thing true and strong in the instability of this national falsehood.

His thoughts and feelings deepened and his character expanded. The one defect lay in the very basis of his enthusiasm. The church that called him, as it were, into being, inevitably cast over his mind that shade of the dreamer, the ascetic, even the fanatic, which the intense reality of a deed such as

he contemplated could not brook. That the cloister is not the best propagator of strong practical deeds history plainly shows. Where the church has won in politics she has done so by abandoning the influence of the cloister. On this young soul, filled with a towering earnestness, the effect of his surroundings and the power that backed him was not conducive to the highest strength. His enthusiasm took the color of his dreams, his hopes became visions.

His brain held, burned into it, the picture of the cell to which, so many years ago, he had been taken, of its occupant, and of the stony coast whose waves and rocks were always, in his mind, associated with night. But he made no inquiries. He recalled his promise and the hermit's anxiety in exacting it. He respected that anxiety. Yet he could not be blind. The existence of such a spot as that to which he had been led could not be altogether unknown to all people. Thus, whether he would or not, he was brought to a half knowledge of its location. Time going on, though he would not search or inquire, he believed he knew where the hermit buried himself.

The year rolled round, the seed was springing up indeed. There were seemingly great forces at work in silence for him. But he must acquire more knowledge and more power and the time must ripen. There came a day in another spring when the monastery walls once more shut him in.

It would be difficult to exaggerate any account of the disturbances of this young land, which, in the first half of this century and later, seemed to have gone mad. No historian has done full justice, if indeed any has tried, to the throes and paroxysms she passed through in that short term of years between the victories of Hidalgo and the fall of

the French. In 1836 Spain finally acknowledged the independence of her embroiled and bitter whilom colony after a virtual independence of no inconsiderable age. But to a casual observer in those times it must have seemed that such success served only to add to the unhappy state.

In 1838 France bombarded Vera Cruz in the interest of the celebrated Pie Claim. The noise of that bombardment found discordant sounds enough throughout the land to answer it. During those days a new constitution was being forced on the people; and a new constitution meant revolution after revolution. When the matter with the French was settled the noise was found to continue from within more deafening than it had been round the walls of Ulua. To follow the changes and unravel the skein of events were useless, if not impossible. In 1839 General Mejia fell into the power of that formidable Santa Anna. About the same time other sections of the land rose up, crying for a new republic, unsatisfied with the one that as yet had had scarce time to breathe. "A new republic," cried they, "called no more Mexico; let it be named Sierra Madre." Sierra Madre went down, a wreck. In 1840 Gutierrez de Estrada wrote pointing out the alleged impossibility of a republic at all. He despaired; he called for and urged the plan of an empire. He was banished and his exile paid for the hazardous views he held. Bustamente was president then; he was so till 1841. In that year that rugged-souled old fighter, Santa Anna, in a revolution founded on the plan of Tacubaya, deposed him. Europe was Bustamente's asylum. Echeverria was president for a few crazy days. He could hold the seat no longer, for Santa Anna, with arms to back him, took it for himself.

In 1843 Bravo's *Junta de Notables* decreed yet another new constitution, and the trouble grew worse. By that constitution Santa Anna was made far more absolute than is compatible with the name of president. Rebellion was rampant; it seemed every corner of the land would rise up in its own half-organized revolt. In 1844 the city of Guadalajara presented a formidable array of armed denial. The waves of that disturbance spread in all directions. Even the regions of the lake felt the heavings of popular indignation; and some out of those quiet fishing huts went forth to skirmish and to die in the city's streets. Santa Anna came in person and the Jalisco revolt was with trouble crushed. The time was fast coming when that old despot would see his powers on the wane. Returning to his capital he found the nation, that had seemed to shudder at his gorgon gaze, in arms against him. After his fall Herrera, for one short year, held his seat. But it was many years yet before the tenacious Santa Anna, bandied about by innumerable events, and rising and falling with them, had at last to acknowledge in his crippled age that his power was grown as rotten as his body. During Herrera's régime the war-clouds of another country, a great and formidable country to the north, began to blow black over the Rio Grande.

Of those from the lake who participated in the Guadalajara insurrection in 1844, was the chief of police of the Chapala canton, an officer called in Mexico *jefe politico*, head of the gendarmes of one of the sections into which the states are divided. He was a hard-boned, gray-headed old man. When the trouble grew hottest the governor had called him and his men to aid the state troops, such as there were. He had gone with fire in his eye, riding out hotly

one night at dusk toward the city. He had got the worst of it, and three weeks later, when the revolt was crushed, they came carrying him home to the lake on a canvas cot, whereon he raved and tore his hair in a delirium. He died while they were crossing the stony market square of his town of Chapala.

He who came to take the place of the fallen chief was that same gendarme who had long before led Clarita back to the inn. He rode into the town at night. He appeared the very next morning striding along the beach surveying his ground, an athletic figure whose step was the step of youth and alacrity. Pistols hung at his belt and a spur clinked on his heel. It was then he found Clarita sitting in the hut's door reading a book. In spite of the years the recognition was immediate.

"I have found you at last!" cried he in frank delight. "And all the way I wondered, is the little one still here!"

She was fifteen years of age, and yet a child. She arose with modest blushes and held out her hand. She saw again the color of his face, unusual to her. She noticed, too, that if his speech had had in it before a foreign accent, it had lost it now.

"Thank you, señor, for taking me," she replied. "It was very good of you."

"Books!" said he. "I come and find you reading a book, and here among fishing boats. What fairy-land am I to be master of?"

"It is a book Vicente sent me," said she. "It is about Rome and Hannibal, and how he crossed the Alps, and the battle of Cannæ. So many things," she sighed, absently smoothing the mesh of her shining hair, "seem to have happened in the world."

"Many more than you dream, little one, and many that it were well you dream not."

There were suddenly heard the thuds of a horse's feet and a high-spirited steed burst on the new-comer's view, scattering sand from its hoofs. It pranced along the beach to Clarita's hut, bearing Pepa on its back — Pepa grown older, more beautiful, resplendent now in many colors, her blue skirt scarcely hiding the black-stockinged ankle at the side-saddle's stirrup. She flashed a laughing eye at Clarita and called to her and checked her steed.

"Another of my subjects," said the new-comer to himself. "Perhaps, after all, it may not be quiet enough here for a recluse like you, Don Rodrigo. A fine horse," he added aloud. "A remarkably fine horse. But tell me, my never-forgotten little friend," turning to Clarita, "how it has been with you since I saw you so long ago and you told me of your land so that I fain would have come to it with you?"

"And why, señor, have you come at last?"

"Did I not tell you your pleading for your native shore must draw me away?"

"Oh, señor, I am sure it was another reason."

Pepa, unnoticed, restless on that account, colored high at this neglect. She would not seem to care or listen, not she. Yet she knew she strained her ears lest the sound of the light morning waves drown the words of him who had dared to see only her horse! She knew that white man was somehow different from her race. She felt, the first time in her life, that here was one with whom she would not dare to romp and flirt.

"The reason was chiefly that, I give you my honor on it," said Rodrigo. "I remembered you always;

and I wanted to get away, being a roving sort of youth and not liking it there, nor anywhere else very much. And I could smell these waters and see the mountains, my honor on it, little one, from the very eloquence of your speech. And I said it would suit me. Then we had wars and troubles in Guadalajara — though not like Hannibal and Rome, Heaven save us! And I'm afraid I killed somebody at one time. At least I, with others, shot at a mob, and some of them died. It happened that the life of the governor, who was a friend of mine, was saved by that shooting. He would insist that I had done a good thing, though it had been only to kill people, and, heigh-ho! little girl, killing people is n't a good thing. Well, in spite of me he would reward me; and then it chanced that your *jefe politico* here was killed."

"Ah, I know about that," said Clarita gravely.

"Well, remembering your eloquence, I said to the governor, 'Make me the *jefe politico* of Chapala.' And he did it."

"Oh!" cried she in delight, suppressed with timidity, being ignorant of the times to come as was he, "you are the new *jefe*! I am so glad! I know you will take good care of us, señor."

"Good-by, Clarita!" Pepa was calling, tossing her head and dancing two middle fingers at the girl on the ground, and letting her impatient steed move away. "I had something to tell — never mind — another day!"

"I too am going in that direction," said Rodrigo. "Good-by, little one; I will see you many times."

Pepa did not make her horse go very swiftly; neither did she look at the *jefe*, who overtook her and walked at her side along the beach.

"Yes," said he, never looking higher than the

beast's neck, "a remarkable horse. Now how much would you say that horse is worth?"

"Enough," said she shortly. "But I got it."

Her family was not of the common classes. Her widowed mother at the *meson* had been the wife of no peon and the inn itself was no common, dirty *fonda*. There was money in the family, as there is to this day in many a secluded Mexican family which gives no outer demonstration of it. Pepa had wanted the horse. Alas! she would have created trouble for some one had she failed to secure it.

"Oh, it is yours?" said he.

"Of course," haughtily piqued at the exclusiveness of his interest.

"Then I should like to buy him. I have to buy several in fact. Now what would you take for your horse? I nearly killed my best one coming here so fast."

"And why, señor, did you, a foreigner, come here?"

"Call me not that," he replied, plucking a fig from the *salati* to which they had arrived. "My soul is your country's soul, señorita. Well," musingly, "you see how the waves come beating in and kill themselves in that foolish way. They commit suicide thus. It chances that in the land from which I came men sometimes want to do likewise. And if they are not bold enough — they like to come to places where it is lonely."

She made no reply. She only looked at him. The life of Josefa Aranja had this day come to a new path. After a moment she turned her horse's head abruptly and rode slowly away toward the street.

"Adios, señor," said she.

"And you will not sell your horse?"

Had he, then, seen nothing, nothing but the horse? She went on into the town. Pepita was dreamy till nightfall.

There came other days, and many of them, wherein he saw her plainly enough, and made no secret of it; wherein, too, he grew to know her as did no other.

Clarita also he saw, and in time learned the great difference between her of the high spirit and this quieter one.

The two had scarcely left the latter when a *mozo* from the church came bringing her a letter. All her communication with Vicente was through the priest. She eagerly seized it. There was no other thing in her life that brought her a pleasure such as came with these letters, save the coming of Vicente himself; and, since that year he had spent about the lake, he had come but once, eight months before the writing of this epistle. He had stayed three weeks then and returned. It was a serious letter, couched in the terms of his own mood. Wrapped in a sweet delight, she read as follows:

LITTLE SISTER, — I ought to write happily to you, remembering that you are a child. The letter should be bright. But you have never, Clarita, seemed quite a child to me. Whether it is that I, weighted as I am with the purpose you know, have oppressed you, — no, I am sure you will not say this is it. It is because your spirit is older than your body. So I never feel that I must write myself to you other than I am. And for one with that before him that I have before me, to call himself happy were folly. Yet I am not repining. My hopes are high. But you will understand how the lightness of boyhood must now long since have passed from me.

Clarita, it is a strange thing, this that I have to do, and

a very great one. The unhappy state of our people works unhappiness in me. I am overcome, at times, contemplating the little that they have, the very much that they need. Since I last wrote to you I have been away. I went to Mexico City that I might see the heart of the country. It is a troubled heart. Even its own beatings it knows not. It is war and tyranny and selfishness — selfishness always. The land has no time to turn to those pursuits by which it should live. It seems dying in paroxysms.

I found there a class unlike any that you know, though there are some of them here, too; a class of aristocrats, people educated, versed in the world. There are wonderful women there, little girl, and men whose intelligence, were it not blind, should bring about better things. I saw with bitterness that these, a small minority of my people as they are, had lost sight, in their wrangling, of the masses of us who live away, who crowd the little towns and make the country. These masses alone can I claim for my people. And the enlightenment and the power that the others have must one day be to them.

But how very far are these our people from ability to reach enlightenment! Can there be, anywhere on the globe, a race that needs more? And this in particular brings sadness to me: the thing they do most need is character. Truth, honesty, faithfulness, these our people have not, these they dream not. In my readings of other peoples, Clarita, I always felt their histories started with some quality we do not have. They were stable. I wondered, then, is it because my nation is young that it knows not truth? I think it is not so. Our ancient ancestors, the Aztecs, kept faith, and they were newer than we. Heart rottenness, faithlessness, deceit, — these I have found to be qualities of old nations, nations run out, living in tradition. And as my heart is true and as I am writing to her I love as my own blood, I swear I believe that the dishonesty of my race comes from Spain. It is the tainted

blood. We were not highly civilized before the Spaniards came. I will not claim even that which others have claimed. But had Spain not wronged us we should have reached a development which this broken Spanish offspring knows not. Clarita, longing for something true, something firm and strong, I have looked about me in vain. Somewhere under the current it may be — but invisible. Let me say it with shame, veracity is gone from the whole scheme of the Mexican character. I have wept and cursed and called us no more than a nation of liars and thieves. The seller in the market cheats his neighbor a score of times every day that he breathes the air. The child at its mother's skirts learns first of all, greatest and chiefest lesson, to lie for gain. Everywhere that I go my heart bleeds. What can I do with these; what can I hope from a nation from whose whole moral life truth has been taken away, to whom dishonesty is virtue — theft, success? This to me, in the masses of the people, who are under the current of the political storms, is sadder than the embroiled condition of the government that shifts and fights over their heads.

But I must not, I will not despair. How I long to do it all, to lift them! But it will take generations. If I can be but the beginning of something stable, let me not say that I have lived in vain. Somewhere under the current must lie the truth, and I know in other things my people have traits that have, many times, made nations of the greatest power before whom the world has trembled. They have all else. Let them only be taught in this night that truth, truth alone, will bring the day. I see but one way. There must come, and there will come, as surely as the sun rises, some man of strength, some iron soul that can grasp the nation and hold it in the way of progress. There must be a heart that never flinches; an eye that sees into every nook and corner of the land; a mind that grasps all, digests all; a soul that loves and is true. That man will come. Might it be I! But despair not; if not I, then

another. Let failure stalk on ; I can nevertheless prophesy, the century shall not die till he come.

In these thoughts, what comfort to turn to you, little girl by the lake ! You alone are true. I read your last letter with delight. Your writing improves, and you can think. That you love the books I have found for you is much happiness to me. Pepa too has written. How secretly she learned long ago, and how she surprised us, when last I came, by writing in the sand ! May the time come when there shall not be a canton where schools are not, and scarcely a peon's child that cannot read. Pepa has won my heart. How deeply I had grown to love her I did not know till I saw her last. Already is she a woman. Tell her that my promises to her, when last I saw her, are locked in my breast. She is not absent from me. Let me not be absent from her. I shall write to her soon, and let love hold us as one.

And so, good-by, my sister. I shall come sometimes to Chapala for a short while only, before I come at last for the great deed—and then, Heaven be my guide ! And turn not from your sweet, pure walking in the world. Be truth, Clarita, in this darkness of untruth. Let the world lie, let faith die away, I know you will carry in your heart the virtue that was your mother's, the faithfulness that is your own. Go you with God.

VICENTE.

He did come one other time before the great time came. And after that the waiting began drawing to an end. What power he had was gathered close in him, ripening fast. Meanwhile the waves of revolution ceased not to sweep the land. The people saw little chance for safety. Comfort and peace failed together. Dissatisfaction was abroad. In this unstable state the very means of living must grow more scant. Corn, that chief factor of the food of the com-

mons, had scarce time to grow, till the hot blasts withered it. Famine occurred from time to time in many parts. It came at length to Jalisco and the lake region. There was a dearth of corn. The same old cause that has stirred the masses since the days of Rome, ay, and long before, served to raise them here.

But even in this, fish could still be drawn from the lake. The great majority of these people were not really hungry. A leader who was more a man of the world, who had fewer visions and was more practical, would not have mistaken the sporadic uprising of a few for a profound movement, nor the results of his own magnetism, and the church's under-working, for the evidences of a permanent change. He would have feared the current was shallow.

PART SECOND

TIZAPAN

CHAPTER I

THE nucleus of the army was born during the summer of 1846. Vicente left the monastery early in July, and, without going to his former home, proceeded to Ocotlan, a town on the lake some distance to the east of Chapala. The clergy had been, in all this region, diligently at work. The priest of Ocotlan received him. The last of his plans were there matured. He began a slow journey round the lake's borders, not for the purpose of raising any considerable number of troops, rather to prepare, in conjunction with the priesthood, for the uprising on a second circuit which he should undertake at the completion of the first. He wished, on this primary journey, merely to gather up a small body of some two hundred men whom he knew personally, and understood to be even now ready for him. He would drill that body, and make it the beginning whereto subsequent rebels might cling.

By the end of July he was on the lake's southern side at Tizapan. Quiroz here joined him. They proceeded to Tuxcueco and San Luis. When they arrived at the latter place they were at the head of more than one hundred men. They made no demon-

stration. They interfered with nothing, produced nothing of a revolution. They held their men in check and drilled them. They found the clergy working as silently and quickly as they. They knew just what number of soldiers they might expect from each town when they should come again. Months before there had arrived, little by little, in certain of the larger places, arms and ammunition purchased by the church. These should be at Vicente's disposal. Some of his troop came already armed. Those who did not were quietly provided for. By late August he was in Jocotepec, at the lake's western end, with his expected band of two hundred. He camped them a mile from the town.

He, with Doroteo, spent an additional month in that spot. He received secret word, almost every day, from the priesthood relative to the depositories of arms, the well mapped-out course of his coming triumphal march with its prearranged details concerning camps and provision for the army. As yet his force was infantry, save ten. He drilled them thus for lack of horses. But there were negotiations on foot for more animals. It was his determination to mount every man possible and as quickly as he could. This, too, was the church's purpose. It was hoped and believed that by the completion of half the second circuit he might see his entire force, grown as it should be, mounted. With a formidable array of cavalry, composed of these hardy riders, he would be safe against immediate attack to organize more infantry, or, should the time seem ready, make a quick dash and carry consternation immediately to Guadalajara itself.

Whatever may be said as to the rawness of the

rest of his troops (from the very speed of his subsequent movements not well organized) it is certain that his nucleus of two hundred became, under his hand, like a fine machine. He spent day and night in labor over them. He won their hearts. He learned to wield them with the accuracy and precision of a single tool.

All this time, though occasionally menaced, he was not disturbed. He had produced absolutely no confusion, and the public mind was not roused. The State was impoverished as to troops. Every canton had been sucked of its blood for many wars. There were no State troops whatever in the lake region, few enough anywhere else. The only defenders of these districts were the *jefes politicos* of the cantons and their few gendarmes. Even these police had been diminished in number for distant combats. At Chapala there was but the ridiculous number of eleven. The cantons were small. If Vicente found himself exciting hostility in one, he had but to flit with his troop into another, where a different, weakened, and unroused *jefe* held sway.

On a day of September, the summer rains having about ceased, and the long dry season being on the point of beginning, he suddenly, without warning, crossed the boundary of Rodrigo's dominion at Ajicjic, entered the Chapala canton, and appeared late in the evening with his two hundred in Chapala itself. They marched in quietly, meeting no opposition, wheeled down the main street, issued on the beach, and camped there for the night.

The town was profoundly stirred, but without tumult. Rodrigo (who, as shall be seen, had not been altogether inactive), calling together his

eleven men (they were all mounted), shut himself up in the *patio* of the *jefatura politica*, cursed his fortune for dividing the State as it was, and leaving him in one division of it with eleven men, laid the matter before his confederates, and speedily decided his course.

The revolutionary band was provided for and left in the hands of lieutenants. Quiroz, night approaching, went with his quick tread for a secret conference with the priest. Vicente first found Clarita alone in the fishing hut, and, having spent with her a half hour, which to that lonely girl was a space of intense delight, left her, and proceeded to the inn. The night had come, and the waves were rising on the lake. The last pink glow of the sunset lingered in the zenith. The wind came fresh and strong out of the watery west, and blew over camp and town. He entered the *meson*, whose wide, inner *corredores* and *patio* with plants were silent and dark. He proceeded straight to a room reserved for him. He wondered where was Pepa.

Having left ajar the door leading into the wide veranda, he lit a candle. He stood there a moment, its light over his features, displaying the high forehead, the sensitive mouth, the strong chin, — above all, the peculiar whiteness of his complexion. He stared out into the shades of the silent *patio*. The guests at this time of year were few. Supper was not served till two hours later. The *corredores* were unlighted. Where was Pepa? She had been informed of his coming. He waited yet a half hour. She had not come.

He had just turned with knitted brow to the candle, when she suddenly appeared, framed in the shadowed doorway. She had grown taller. She

was never more beautiful. She gave a little cry, but advanced slowly. He met her half-way, held her, and gazed into her eyes. Something in them produced in him a sudden gloom. She seemed changed. There was an unwonted touch of sadness in her face.

"Pepa!" he cried. "What is it? You do not seem like the old Pepa. Tell me!"

"The old one? Ah, Vicente, you do not want the old one." She looked dreamily at the light. "No, no — a new one, one that knows you and understands the greatness of all you will do. Vicente, I am turned into a half wild girl these times. Oh! I am restless! I want to do something — to act, like you." She pressed closer to him. "Tell me," she whispered, "when is the first blow to be struck. When can we fight?"

He laughed gently at her.

"You, the woman," cried he, "calling for blood! Pepa, you have been to me the soul of this great hope. I have carried you with me wherever I went. That I may come to her, I said, before the real war begins, and let her be the final inspiration of it, — her love the beginning and the power of it — this will be my happiness. You have lifted this dream above dreams, that march above the acts of adventurers. I have lain down every night with your face before me, arisen every morning with Pepa for the spring of the day's deeds. You are restless; your blood bounds with the uncrushed spirit of the old days as does mine. Then may you indeed begin the action. Pepa, the time of quiet marches and drilling is this night passed. Tell me — are you ready with your own hands to begin for me the new course?"

"What is it?" she whispered eagerly. There was a depth to that eagerness that even he did not comprehend. She grew suddenly solemn, hanging on his words. He believed her face slightly darkened.

"It is this," said he. "The first overt act shall be committed to-night. The time is ripe. I need now at last to make the one irrevocable leap. Hitherto I have done nothing distinctly hostile. I will show my intentions plainly to-night, that all the world may see. The provocation must come from me. I can no longer go on increasing my numbers without opposition. So let it be plainly war. Three hundred men await me at Mescala, whither I go to-morrow. Ocotlan has others. By to-morrow night, so ready is the machinery of the church, I shall march into the latter place with eight hundred. The progress henceforth is swift, open. I am from this night in war. To break into it boldly, so that there may be no retreat either for me or for my men, I shall take possession of the canton building here before midnight."

She turned suddenly pale. But she conquered the thought that caused the pallor, and smiled that dazzling smile of hers. She grasped his hand in a tight grip, and whispered:

"Will there be a battle?"

"There may be resistance, but I doubt it."

She was silent. She withdrew from him and paced the room. She broke out, presently, into a ringing laugh of keen and reckless merriment. She came back to him where he stood by the candle watching her. She put her hands upon his shoulders, and brought her raised face close to his.

"What am I to do?" she asked.

"I will tell you. The people need some striking beginning to appeal to their imaginations. The match must flare in a way that the populace will see. The moment of the break ought to have in it something that can be told and spread in all directions. Hidalgo, when he raised the people long since, recognized the advantage of the tocsin. He knew that among all the untutored masses that sound would ring out and produce an effect that a hundred proclamations would not cause. I have thought of this long. Pepa, you shall ring the tocsin and start the revolt. My men shall be ready. A quick and orderly march will be made to the *jefatura politica* and the place taken. The flame will then be lit. None can turn back. My reign will begin when you touch the bells of the church."

Her blood was bounding; yet it did not produce that burst of enthusiasm he had expected.

"If they resist," she whispered, "and you seize them, will they — will they be — killed, even the leader?"

"Untamed, indeed!" cried he. "What, then, is the beautiful barbarian's idea of war! They shall only be held, unless they die fighting. What is it? Have I dreamed this poor little dream in vain?"

She threw her arms around him with a feverishness that he may have thought he understood.

"I will do it!" she cried. "What is the hour?"

"Twelve o'clock," said he.

She broke away from him and ran to the door. She turned, and her eyes were blazing with the light he thought he loved and understood. What man's mind could have been prism enough to separate and count the rays that made that light? The

fever in her grew. She threw a quick kiss at him from her finger tips and was gone.

A *mozo* was lighting lamps over dining-tables which stood in the *corredor*. She could hear her mother's voice in the far kitchen. She went out into the dark passage that led into the street, passed a shadow standing there, and was startled that it slightly moved. She came into the street, and went wandering restless, bareheaded, toward the lake. She stood at last under the *salati* tree, the water beating up on the sand before her. She suddenly started and turned. The shadow that had been in the passage had followed her with lithe, silent tread. She could see his pointed sombrero, and the points of his moustaches were barely visible.

"Josefa Aranja," whispered he, half mockingly, — "the heroine — ah, she of the bells. Does she dream of the long future wherein the tocsin shall still ring Pepa's fame and memory! The days and the years will go by and die. The king will reign; and pupils in schools will learn of her, of her who rang the bells. And after many years there will be a high bronze statue in a beautiful park in the city's centre, and the statue will be the slender figure of Josefa Aranja. And on this day school children shall sing and bands shall play, and there shall be wreaths on her head and wreaths at her feet, — though Pepa shall know it not, for that she lies yonder, where the sun falls yellow on the sod! Ah! picture of beauty! — she who rang the tocsin, and is called her country's liberator!"

She turned angrily on him, her very forehead burning.

"And Doroteo Quiroz," she cried, "may be called a traitor on that day!"

She ran away and disappeared in the darkness. She came at length under the two slender white spires. The church was dark and deserted, and in the empty walled court before it she spent the next few hours alone, seated in the darkness at a tower's base. Those hours were unhappy ones. When the clock over her head struck half-past nine, she could sit still no longer. She sighed and arose.

"He will be fleeing," murmured she, feeling the heat on her face.

The clock struck yet other quarters. The struggle in her that made the hours unhappy grew fiercer as the night advanced. It was at last intolerable, and she could wait no more. It was half-past ten when she went slowly up the deserted street past her home, and came, with something like stealth, to the open market square. The tiny shops were closed and the stone-flagged space was bare, save for a few lime and orange trees. She crossed it with a quick impulsive burst of speed, the struggle in her having ended.

She came at length to that long, low, white building over whose door the words "*Jefatura Politica*" were painted in yellow letters. She flitted to the iron-barred window in the shadow. The window's doorlike inner shutters were closed, though she could detect little gleams of light coming through the cracks. She held to the bars, her untamed heart beating swiftly. She put her face to them after a time and called, scarcely above a whisper:

"Don Rodrigo!"

There was no sound from within. She shivered a little. She could just hear the clock striking a quarter to eleven, the tones wavering up from the lake on the uncertain wind. She became a little

piqued and then half angry. She laughed with scorn of herself, but nervously. She slipped on, then, to the door, some yards distant. It was very large, and double, to permit of the passage of horses. It was made of heavy, thick wood, set in something of a recess. She was at it, silently extending her hand toward the iron knocker, when a guard stepped from the recess's shadow.

"What do you want?" asked he.

She was too daring not to go on now in the course begun.

"To speak to the *jefe*," she whispered, shrinking as much as possible into the darkness.

"Oh!" he said, recognizing her. "He is busy."

"I will speak to him," she said imperiously.

"Go and tell him to let me in."

The man entered, and presently returned and admitted her, closing the door after her. She went through the stone-paved passage that led to the *patio*. That inner court was very large. On two sides, approached by wide-roofed *corredores*, were offices, a court, and living rooms for Rodrigo, and certain other officials. Opposite the door, barely distinguishable in the gloom on the far side, were many stables. There was a door there, too, leading out to the rear at St. Michael's foot, where there was no beaten path among the boulders and over the rocky mountain side, but where it was possible for a horse to go, reaching thus, by a circuit, the Guadalajara road.

She heard some confusion in the darkness of that distant side where the stables stood. One towering and spreading *mamey* tree in the *patio's* centre swayed and sighed with the wind. She tiptoed along the bricks and gently knocked where a beam

of light came through a keyhole. Rodrigo himself opened the door. She had shrunk away and hidden herself in the shadow. He saw only the night, and heard only the confusion at the stables. She somehow felt or feigned fear. He stepped out and caught sight of her dress as the wind fluttered it. His face became suddenly serious, seen in the light from the office.

"What is it?" said he, in a voice hardly audible.

"You do not ask me to come in," she replied. She was sulking in the shadow. He presently succeeded in drawing her out of it.

She went in and sat down by a large square table whereon were papers and a pistol with its cartridge belt. He sat down opposite and gazed at her. She had heard his spur clink as he entered. She arose boldly, closed the door, and returned to her seat. Her face showed the extreme high tension of her nerves. It was with her a peculiar moment, wherein a native, reckless daring combated with fear, even with shame. She spread out her fingers on the table, and did not look at Rodrigo or say anything. She merely sat there. Then the blood rushed to her face.

"You have come," said he at last, slowly, "because the troubles and the wars are beginning. I was never blind to the fact, Pepa, that you had a lover. So the — friendship that sprang up and lived and grew to be — well, it was not a cold one — between us, you feel must give way. We are sooner or later to go different paths. You would be an enemy, should it fall to my lot to fight, that would lend more meaning to fighting. Knowing you as I have known you, I fancied many times that when the silent little army reached this place you would

desert us and turn Amazon. You have come to say good-by; is it not so?"

She threw back her head and let her eyes rest on him. They were burning, and the red blush was in her very temples.

"I can say it if you wish," said she, half petulantly, half solemnly.

"It is not I, it is the troubles that wish," he replied. "You have made the days pass with an added light in them, — the sad old days. I shall ever be glad I knew you. May you never, in these bad times that are coming, do such great deeds as to be no longer the girl you are. Pepa, I shall remember you always as you were in the days when we knew each other."

"Remember me!" cried the impetuous girl, arising with anger and pain in her face. "No — crush me out of your memory. I will ask but that one favor. If, when I come, as I came to-night, with a thing on my tongue to say, which I trembled thinking of, that would have been, perchance, more nearly like ruin to me than great deeds, and I dare not say it, rather fling it away from me — if, when I am thus, you call up some old days coldly, and all but tell me to say the last farewell and be gone — then I pray you, Don Rodrigo, in the name of unspoken faith, do not strain your foreign ideas of kindness to keep me in your memory!"

Many a time he had feared the possibilities in this girl. He had vainly tried to hold her back. He was struck now by a positive grief that stood out for one second on her face.

"You hate me — you despise me!" she cried suddenly. "Let the bird break its wings!"

She was leaving him, hurrying to the door. He

sprang forward and reached it before her. He flung it open and pointed out. She looked, and the light from the room fell in a wide streak across the *patio*. She beheld horses there saddled, and men in secret haste saddling others. She heard his spur again clink on the bricks. She realized the purposed flight.

"Go!" whispered he. "You must not stay. Whether you will it or not I shall remember you. You see the horses — you understand. You need not say the thing you were afraid to say. Never — never!"

She moved away.

"And thank you!" he called after her, thinking of days she had brightened for him, himself struck with a sudden sadness.

She was surprised, her heart brought back, by those last words. She turned from the shadow one instant, and smiled on him a quick smile which he never forgot. She ran out, then, to the street, and was gone.

He knew at once that she had misinterpreted his thanks. He knew that was the thing above all else he should not have said. He muttered self-accusations and turned back into the room.

Her mood was changed. She was become eager, full of intense excitement, happy with a happiness that made her heart sing. She drowned all other thoughts, recalling his last words and look, crushing all other visions. This was enough, like liquor that in itself suffices though it bring unheeded pain afterward. She would not return to the *meson*; nor would she speak to or see any other human being till midnight should come. She crossed the plaza and went to the east. She turned then into the

darkness of a street that leads to the lake behind the church. She wandered on down toward the water, her happiness becoming, as she came, mingled with a certain pensiveness which seemed ever a part of her nature, which was, indeed, the trait most fascinating in her.

She was as still as the night. Behind the church there were lime-kilns, huge and smoking. They stood at the beginning of the open beach. She came to them. The burner suddenly threw open the door of one of the blazing furnaces in order to heave in more wood. A shaft of intense red light shot out across the beach and the lake, so that the sand and the water seemed burning with it, and a tunnel was cut into the heart of the night. She stopped near the kiln in the shadows. The burner heaved in a stick, and then suddenly saw her appear in the brightest of the light, staring into the fierce mass of white fire. He was startled. She looked, bathed in that brilliancy, like the fire's very spirit. He gaped at her and turned to his work.

"Pretty hot," volunteered he.

She went away toward the water.

"No — no," said she, slowly. "That is n't hot."

The door of the furnace was shut, and the night buried in darkness the shaft the light had cut. She came to the water's very edge, where the night waves rolled on the sand, running frantic races all along the shore, out of blackness into blackness, white demons that they were.

When the clock struck three-quarters past eleven, she entered the walled front court of the church, and came to the side of the right-hand tower. In its base was an open door leading to stairs and the belfry. It was never closed, and the bell-ringers

lived in huts by the lime-kilns. She went in and groped in the narrow space of blackness for the steps. Then she began to ascend. As in many Mexican churches of to-day the stairs to the bells were stone and spiral. They were very old and worn, by much use, into deep hollows. She circled round and round and up, in the darkness, her hands following the stone wall and the central stone shaft. She could see absolutely nothing. She came at last to the spiral's summit, traversed a short passage, went under a low doorway, and issued in the belfry.

It was open to the free air on all sides. At its corners many slender white pillars supported the spires above. Their lightness and grace were pure beauty even in the night. The cool west wind swept through under the bells which hung their great weights and iron tongues over her head. She felt for the rope of the largest, a bell of deep voice. The cord was tied to the clapper. Having assured herself of its position, she went to the belfry's side and leaned over the stone railing, waiting. She grew again feverish, and could scarcely be still. The wind cast her black hair all about her face and fluttered her skirts. She sang an odd and melancholy song:

“ Oh thou Fair God ! when wilt thou come again,
That all the barren land may laugh with flowers ?
Fulfil thy sacred promises to men,
Bring us the fruits of thy mysterious powers !
We die — forsake us not.
Hast thou thy sons forgot ?
Thou wast our fathers' God — Be ours ! Be ours ! ”

She waited yet another silent minute. Then the silver voice under her began proclaiming the hour of midnight. She turned and seized the rope, and

counted. At the last stroke she put out all her energy, and the great clapper crashed against the bell. The tocsin pealed out, not once nor twice, but many times. She swung the iron tongue to and fro with mighty clangor. All the silent night seemed suddenly shattered by that battering hail of sound. The town was up and the cry raised. The days of primitive peace were done.

The two hundred had been drawn up in the plaza a moment before the hour. They had marched quietly and stood in quiet. There was no marked demonstration. When the tocsin sounded and the townspeople began gathering in wonder, the troops were brought in order to the *jefatura politica*. The bell having ceased, Doroteo Quiroz's lithe form went noiselessly to the wooden door. He knocked resoundingly, and demanded the surrender of the place in the name of the new government. There was no reply. He knocked again, and again demanded in a loud voice. No answer. The next step was already decided upon. With one hundred men Vicente had now disappeared up the street, wheeled the corner and ascended to St. Michael's side, from which he could reach the building over a tortuous course at its rear. All was done quietly and in order. There was no wish to cause fighting or bloodshed.

Quiroz, in front with the other hundred, quietly awaited a signal. The townspeople still came flocking, and huddled about in silent groups in the darkness of the plaza. In the midst of that silence an unexpected thing occurred. The great Fortino (long since, in the recesses of his crude heart, a deep admirer of Vicente) had secretly wished to join the new movement. Not appreciating the full

value of order and a quiet declaration of war, he now, in the crowd's middle, seeing the ice broken and the revolution begun, became inspired to deeds. He felt his vast muscles tingle. He was exasperated that the door opened not, and that Vicente's forces stood thus balked. An unreasoning enthusiasm entered him. In silence he trod up the street after the one hundred who had disappeared. He was in that street now alone, bending over something. The most prominent constituent of the ceilings in many Mexican houses is the enormous beams that are left visible, sometimes beautifully carved. These are frequently of such size and weight as to astonish the beholder. One of them lay, on this night, in the street before an unfinished house. It was over twenty feet long and exceedingly thick. It was thought six men would be needed to put it in place. Over this bent the enthusiastic giant. He had begun to chuckle a deep, inward chuckle. He kneeled and seized the timber at its middle. Some from the crowd had now lit torches of a resinous wood called *ocote*, and came running hither.

"Away! away!" growled the big one. "Leave me to it!"

He heaved and groaned. Great folds of skin, bristling with hair, bulging on his neck, were visible in the flickering light. The width of his back seemed suddenly doubled. He put out his tremendous strength, swelled and strained, sweat dripping from his flaming countenance. Those watching were amazed to see the timber slowly rise, till it rested on his shoulder, — a position unusual for the burden of a Mexican carrier. Then he came erect, his legs straightening inch by inch. He was facing the plaza, and balanced himself with that

great weight, looking ahead. He chuckled still, rumblingly. He was absorbed, seeing no one.

"Out of the way!" thundered he. "Give me room. Give — me — room!"

He had begun his astonishing course, and the spectators held their breath. That mass of wood that scarcely one of them could have lifted went heavily on, a mammoth battering ram. The chuckle of the bearer grew louder. The perspiration became streams. He went his ponderous way down the street, his speed increasing. He broke from a walk to a trot, and the trot grew faster. He gathered momentum and charged on, being like a locomotive let loose. Every step he took added to his irresistibleness. His tread seemed to shake the ground. They saw him coming, looming out of the shadows, and spread to right and left. His chuckle grew louder and burst into a low roar. He was running now, fearfully. He could no more have stopped himself than if he had been some cyclone sweeping down on the lodgings of the *jefe*. He neared the plaza, swerved through a great arc to the right, and made the quarter circle, the timber wheeling with him. His roar burst into a shout and the end of that ram crashed straight through the wood of the door, went crunching on full half of its twenty feet of length, cut a square hole for itself, as though it had been cast from a cannon, and stuck, fastened there, horizontal, its hither half protruding into the street. The shock had hurled Fortino back, but not discomfited him. He let the chuckle sink slowly into silence, and sat down on the opposite side of the street, satisfied. Thus unexpectedly and un-called-for, in the matter of revolution had Fortino declared himself.

The soldiers and some of the crowd seized the protruding end and swayed on it. The door was speedily demolished and an entrance thus effected at the same time that Vicente found the rear door wide open, and marched in at the head of his men. The two parties met. The crowd surged in after them, and filled the *patio*. Torches flared from many hands, and the deserted condition of the place was apparent.

The first who pushed in after Doroteo's soldiers was Pepa, her face full of excitement.

"They have gone!" said she in Doroteo's ear.

He turned a piercing eye on her and smiled a gallant but half mocking smile.

"And how does the fair one know?" whispered he, drawing out the point of his moustache.

She flashed a keen look of defiance at him, and, going to Vicente, flung her hand up wildly in air and hailed him as victor. The crowd rallied round her, instinctively making her a leader, and shouted with her. Having satisfied their curiosity they surged out. Excitement was growing and they seized Fortino, had him up on shoulders (a task fraught with difficulty), and bore him triumphantly to and fro amidst tumult.

"Anastasio," said Francisco, looking on dubiously, "this triumph of Fortino's is treason to us."

"He will come to a bad end," drawled Anastasio.

There were to be a few hours' sleep for the soldiers before the march to Ocotlan. Vicente at length returned to the *meson*. He found Clarita there waiting for him and trembling. It was there he bade her good-by, lingering long with her. She was very sad when she finally turned away. He had but left her when Pepa, excitement still high in

her, met him in the barely lit *corredor*. She threw her arms round his neck.

"Vicente!" she cried, "I am going with the army!"

He grew pale.

"My horse is the best of them all," cried she, the feverish burning of the eyes and temples visible again. "And I cannot stay! I am made for this. Call it wild they may — but I am wild. Already the soldiers rallied round me. I can be the spirit of it!"

"Pepa — Pepita! What mad dream is this!"

She broke away and ran to her room, laughing over her shoulder at him.

"I am going!" cried she, and disappeared.

He knew too well that the thing on which she set her heart she did.

CHAPTER II

THERE was no sign of dawn over the eastern waters, and the crowd had dispersed and left silence, when a candle was lit in Fortino's hut. Fortino's hut was on the beach, like those of the other fishers; and it was so small and so frail, being made of reeds, that it trembled to its foundations at the very approach of the monster who lived in it. It seemed there need be no surprise should his head burst through the thatch, or an arm or a great leg be heard crashing in the walls. He was again chuckling, smotheredly, and the very bristling folds on the back of his neck were damp with perspiration. Some new things in the way of possible deeds and honor had come into the brain of Fortino, and the vistas of war were opened up to him.

A rollicking song came unsteadily along the beach, interrupted by an occasional hiccough. It echoed crazily in the night, and came nearer. It quite entered Fortino's hut, and, with it, the singer came too. Francisco's eyes were observed staring at the light, and Francisco's broad grin became a prominent furnishing of the bare hovel. Some distance over his head Anastasio's became visible, blinking, sleepy. Fortino sat down heavily on the floor.

"A traitor shall not repose!" cried Francisco. "Anyhow, not while there are things like this! Sh! Look. What do you think of this for *spoils*?"

He whispered it with husky intensity, and held out something that glittered in his hand.

"Don't take the spoils, now, Fortino," whined Anastasio. "They are his. To him be the reward." And he came in and lay down with his feet out of the door and his head against the opposite wall. He had left a blanket and a roll of nets outside.

Fortino looked more closely. The thing was an inkstand with a little silver on it. The significance of this possession broke on Fortino. He stared long at it, growing red.

"St. Francis!" muttered he.

"Sh!" said Francisco. "It is out of the *jefe's* office. Ha! ha! All things are to be made public! Spoils to him that can get them," lowering his voice. "Corn? Why, corn is n't going to count!"

"Do you curs mean to say," said Fortino, "that what we can find we get?"

"Why, curse me," cried Francisco, injured, "is n't it *war*?"

"*Si*, and peace and a blessing go with it," said Anastasio, eying the silver. "Let peace be with the war."

"Men," said Fortino, meditating, "you are given over to unworthy thoughts. Besides, what is the thing worth?"

Francisco became knowing, shrewd.

"I don't know what this one will be worth. This war may be worth millions; it may be only thousands. But I do know, *si, señor*, I know *exceedingly well* that wars there have been that would dazzle a fellow's eyes, that there have. Men, there were wars in Rome."

And he elevated his nose.

"Where is that?" inquired Anastasio with interest.

"Rome is a country of kings," said Francisco.

"To the north?" said Anastasio, politely.

"It is — it is an island," said Francisco.

"A fishing country," put in Fortino with authority. "It is among the Triquis. I was in that direction once. It is south."

"Oh, ignorance!" groaned Francisco. "This is not that Rome. This one is farther off. Well, there was a fellow came down on Rome. He came up over the mountains, which were of considerable heights. And a battle was fought, called — the battle was called — Hannibal was the battle called."

"*Si, señor!* It is the name of the place," broke in Fortino with anger, and beating the soil with his fist. "And it is among the Triquis. I have been nigh to it. A fair sized village is Hannibal — *for* an Indian village. The houses there are round, made of cane. I am some travelled, señor. I am well posted on Rome, having been, I tell you again, in that direction once on a burro." And Fortino growled and grumbled away over his Rome in high dudgeon.

"You won't be convinced? This, I tell you, is another Rome further off! And do you know what spoils they gathered up after the battle?"

"The Triquis are an ordinary set. They are a measly tribe, the Triquis," said Fortino. "I wouldn't build much on any spoils out of the Triquis."

"Triquis!" burst out Francisco in hot wrath. "This is Rome! Rome is no Triqui!"

"I know, I know," said Fortino, nodding his head and speaking with calm assurance. "I tell you I was there, and their houses are round."

"Oh, come to the spoils, Francisco," complained Anastasio, sitting painfully erect and waiting.

"I defy you to make an estimate," cried Francisco. "Guess now."

"Was it silver *pesos*, or was it gold?" inquired Anastasio.

"The Triquis have no gold," put in Fortino, stubbornly. "It's rare they get silver even. They are too far west in the wild parts. They do their trading in corn, the Triquis."

"These, I tell you," said Francisco, "were an island of kings — farther off."

"*Si*," said Fortino, "there is a fishing island west of the Triquis."

"Oh, come to the spoils!" cried Anastasio, in exasperation, getting up. "Was it *pesos*?"

"Friends," replied Francisco, his face lit with calm, triumphant happiness, "they gathered up, after the battle of Hannibal in Rome, one bushel of gold rings!"

There was some silence, Anastasio staring with shining eyes.

"Hm!" said Fortino at length, — "nose rings. Don't build on any Indian nose rings. I don't call to mind that the Triquis wore nose rings. But I'll wager you on this: if a bushel of nose rings was ever gathered up out of that measly tribe of Indians they were brass."

"These were *not* brass," contradicted Francisco. "And what is more, they were finger rings."

"Francisco," said Anastasio, with some plaintiveness, "is this a true thing?"

"It is a part of history," said Francisco. "Clarita read it to me out of a book."

Fortino was greatly taken aback.

"Oh," said he, "if it came out of a book." He began to look on Francisco with more interest. "Is that a fact? In the books, eh? Well, maybe it is. I won't go against the books. I never heard of any such thing out of the Triquis. Well — if she read it out of a book."

Anastasio was at the door.

"There is no doubt about their being gold, Francisco?" queried he.

"They were pure gold," said Francisco with importance.

Anastasio sighed heavily, and went out and gathered his nets in his arms. He came to the door.

"It was a whole bushel of them, now, Francisco?" he asked, dreamily. "You wouldn't lie to me, *amigo*?"

"A full bushel of pure gold rings — and this was only a small part of the spoils."

Fortino was still sitting staring up at the narrator. Anastasio sighed again, and went with the roll of nets to the far corner.

"Let them stay here, Fortino, till the day when I return," said he.

"Where in the name of the devil are you going?" grumbled Fortino, like a man irritably convinced.

"To the wars," said Anastasio, with sentiment.

"Are you two fellows going to the wars?" inquired Fortino, eying them both.

They made no direct reply.

"They gathered them up right off of the ground," said Francisco at length, like one seeing the vision of it, — "just gathered them up. No trouble at all filling the bushel, — just gathered them right up."

Anastasio dropped the net in the corner.

"Ah," sighed he, "it is more lucrative than fishing."

They all pondered on it for an hour, chiefly in silence, and the first streaks of the dawn found them pondering on it.

"I don't count on or want the spoils," said Fortino, "but I want to know when he is going to start out for Ocotlan."

"Before sun-up."

"Well, come on," said Anastasio, leading the way, swinging himself out and over the sandy beach toward the plaza. The others followed, the green, blue, and magenta of their respective sashes beginning to glimmer a trifle in the pale dawn.

"Patriotism is a fine thing," said Francisco, sententiously.

"Wars are a ripe good thing," observed Anastasio; and he added, going lankly on before: "St. Mary rewards him that makes sacrifices."

Before sunrise the little force marched out of Chapala, taking the lake road to the east, in which direction lay Mescala and Ocotlan. It had slightly grown both as to infantry and horse, the latter numbering thirteen. It was in good spirits, to which the cool, exhilarating air of the morning added. In the east, over the water, hung the red of the coming sun, and the lake lay still and glassy, waiting, mountains reflected in its clear crystal. A quick, steady progress was maintained till nearly noon. Quiroz rode before the little force of cavalry, keen-eyed, watchful, reserved. Vicente, likewise mounted, followed the horse at the head of his foot soldiers. He was eager to be on, now that the plunge was made. If Rodrigo's departure had been for the purpose of making a stand, that stand could

not be of effect against this force, small as it was, unless in some way the *jefe* should have much increased his own. At the earliest, therefore, Vicente expected no formidable opposition till he should have reached Ocotlan and gathered up the forces awaiting him.

The band that had joined him from Chapala numbered less than fifty. They were undisciplined, and, in the main, unmounted. He had called them together in the early dawn, effected some sort of organization, and made of them a company. He had cast about for a leader. Fortino had long been known to him as a man of great power and dogged clinging to his purpose. The sudden bold, though unauthorized act of the stubborn, hard-headed monster, had appealed to him. He believed him the sort of man from which to make a good soldier. He came to a quick decision, mounted Fortino on one of the few horses obtained in Chapala, and put him at the head of the new force. Anastasio and Francisco were thus under the leadership of their old comrade.

But the horse farthest in the lead of all this motley band did not bear Quiroz. There was yet another before him, — a free, independent member of that army; one to whom no military discipline could or would extend. It was the girl, Josefa Aranja. With many emotions warring in her she had kept her laughing threat, suddenly appearing when the march was ordered, mounted on her incomparable steed, waving her hand at the army, dashing on in front of it. She wore a red dress, — a color she much preferred. She had donned a black *rebozo* that, falling to her shoulders, did not conceal her shining hair. She gave Vicente no

opportunity to expostulate. She galloped away to the front as the troops started, the ends of her *rebozo* fluttering in the wind of her speed. She was followed by the glistening eyes of Doroteo Quiroz.

At first she was joyous, exultant in a sort of barbarous freedom. She turned her head and flashed her smile at all the line and waved them on. She fell back and called to them, saying she would lead them into battle. She was like a fascinating child, full of a restless, consuming spirit. When Vicente, for the last time, pleaded with her not to go on this perilous course, she only laughed, and said she would win his victories for him.

The soldiers, in particular the two hundred trained men of Vicente's own, caught the fair leader's spirit. The novelty of it and her daring roused enthusiasm. They seized upon her as upon some element of luck, an embodiment of fortune. She appealed to their gaming instinct as she did to that of Quiroz. She was the thing to stake it on. She took the place of a banner to rally round. They began at length to cheer her. They threw up caps and called her "La Capitana;" whereat she waved at them again, and kindled fresh enthusiasm with her brilliant smile and her contagious laugh. An army needs something to idolize. She had the nature to draw out its emotion. She could soon become, thus, the idol, the centre of attraction, finally a symbol even vital to it.

After a few hours the dancing of her eyes ceased, and the buoyancy departed from her. The excitement had fed on other things than the exhilaration of thus riding on before. It had been born of a dangerous fire, and had burnt itself out. She was

far in the lead, and a gloom fell on her. She rode slowly, one steady course, looking ahead. The sun had lifted its yellow ball out of the water, and was half way to the zenith. She stared into its reflected image. Her face had grown dark. The men behind her inspired her no more, — indeed, they had never done so. Other dreams were hers as she rode thus, and she knew that the thing that had led her out on this unwonted course was not merely her wild nature, her longing for action. It was another and a deeper thing, — a recollection of days that had not held Vicente in them, of a parting that rankled in her memory. She could be the spirit of battles — yes, she had that unusual nature that has marked some few women out of the long course of history. But had he who was the leader of the troops behind her been another, would the enthusiasm have gone out and the gloom come? She laughed a mirthless scorn of herself. She heard, then, Quiroz's voice behind her. Unconsciously she had let his horsemen come nearer her, and he had reached her side unawares.

"Why did the spirit of the strange one suddenly die?" said he, glittering on her. "What is it that lives hidden in you? Pepa, there is no man in the wide world can read you. But, believe it, there is one that knows your powers. Quiroz, if it please you to hear, is that one. What need the army fear? Ha! — listen." He came closer and whispered it, fastening his eyes on her. "Even though the centre of it were killed, the scheme could live on. Though the leader died — what were even that? Pepa and one servant of hers, who knows her, could yet do all things."

She turned her face to him, flashed a contempt of

that daring speech, and, saying nothing, rode away from him.

Shortly before noon they arrived at Mescala. It was but a collection of mud huts about an irregular and gaunt square, wherein a few lean pigs squealed for the food they were not likely to receive. The lack of corn had fallen heavily on this region. Behind the town were many fields in the mountains which had been wont to sustain a scattered population of whom Mescala represented only the centre. The hand of want had drawn out such military powers as the district possessed. Vicente had not been mistaken in the number of soldiers there to be obtained. There were three hundred armed men, including seven horsemen, awaiting him in the square, under the leadership of a gray-headed old fighter called Pancho. The two bodies shouted greeting to one another and coalesced. Dinner was eaten at that place. Vicente, who had been watching Fortino's manœuvring of his small band, and who was always on the look-out for a leader of merit, had been pleased with the conduct of the giant. He gave him, in addition, a minority of Pancho's men.

The march was speedily renewed. The long hours of the sunny afternoon, coloring the lake white, then yellow, then pink, saw the advancing column ever on the lake's shore, and ever nearer Ocotlan. Evening came on, and the low walls of that town appeared, lit with the light of sunset.

Round about this village the mountains somewhat give way, leaving a plain. Through the plain's middle and by the town runs a small stream that, issuing from the lake, makes away on its long course to the Pacific. The army entered this plain

when the sun was near the western horizon. It marched for a mile over a wide road, cut straight through unfenced fields of green corn. The stalks stood dense on either side, but were of a sickly growth, the rains of the past summer having been light. The mile being nearly traversed, the column issued into a bare space of some one hundred yards' width, crossed that and came to the stream. The banks were not steep. The bed was some thirty yards in width, but the water occupied only some four of the thirty at the farther shore. All the rest of the space between the two low and sandy banks was level, dry, and gravel-covered. The column descended into this bed, crossed it, waded the shallow stream, climbed the other bank, and proceeded toward Ocotlan's adobe houses, which stood immediately at hand. The town made no defence; it could not. Indeed it was already occupied by Vicente's allies. The head of the troops coming to the first street, was met by a hasty messenger from the *presidente* of the town council, who, fearful and with no troops, made haste to surrender. The surrender was no more than received when there came dashing along the Mescala road a boy on foot. He was Pancho's son. He brought the news, pantingly, that a body of cavalry had eaten dinner in Mescala and were pursuing him; they would arrive at once. The youth had slipped away, and, believing himself the especial object of that cavalry's hate, had run the whole distance with all his speed, so marvellous is the endurance of many an Indian lad. He was too excited to have gained any idea of the number of the enemy. All efforts failed to elicit even the most unsatisfactory estimate. Pepa had ridden to him while he delivered his message.

"Was the leader white?" she asked.

"*Si! Si!*" was the reply.

She turned her horse away and rode alone to the river.

Preparation was speedily made for battle. It was determined to hold the bank of the stream next the town. The Ocotlan troops, gathered to join Vicente, were immediately sent for. They came out of the street on the double quick. There were some two hundred and sixty of them, including but six horse. The secret organization effected by the church's powers had so far been thorough. Vicente saw himself at once at the head of more than eight hundred men, the expected number. They were undisciplined save for his original two hundred, but he mustered his skill in their disposition. His cavalry now numbered twenty-six. With Quiroz at their head he placed them to the fore at the stream, extended in a single line. Behind them, on the flat between stream and town, he drew up his foot. He ordered earthworks to be thrown up; but the work of so doing was scarcely begun when the enemy came.

When Don Rodrigo, with his eleven men, rode out of Chapala the night before, it was not his purpose permanently to abandon the field. True, he did not wish for war; yet he had followed Vicente's movements with deep interest. He had early seen that the uprising should be crushed at once, and, being republican to his heart's core, had at times felt some glow of desire to crush it. He was a personal friend of the governor, and possessed, he knew, the confidence and good-will of that somewhat weak executive as did none other of the police of the lake region. Perceiving the danger to grow

more threatening, and the sapped and tottering State to remain impotent, he had, a week earlier, addressed a long and appealing letter to the governor. He had laid the whole situation before him, urged the need of immediate action, reminded him of the powerlessness of the few country police, and finally, with what eloquence he could master, called for a body of troops, however small, to be at once despatched, that the revolt might die in its infancy. He freely offered his own services to lead the attack should no better leader be at hand, at the same time declaring himself not eager for the duty.

The governor was a man of nearly shattered nerves. He was drawn this way and that, buffeted by many waves of the national turbulency. He lacked decision and promptness. There were many other calls for troops, seeming as urgent as Rodrigo's own. The State was poor to penury. Already the panic-stricken executive had been called upon to create soldiers where no soldiers were. He was at his wits' end. There had come no reply to Rodrigo's letter.

The *jefe* had written again, and, when Vicente reached Chapala, he determined to wait no longer. He would go straight to Guadalajara, urge his cause in person, secure what troops he could, and return. He did not wish the leadership. But he would take it should the State furnish no other for the place.

In the middle of the morning, therefore, he was riding with his eleven on the Guadalajara road. He perceived before him a cloud of dust, which, somewhat dissolving, displayed a little band of horsemen approaching him. He halted, and the leader of that band, meeting him, gave him a paper with the governor's seal thereon.

"My one friend in many troubles," it read informally, "you have saved me in this sea before; you will do it now. You talk of leaders and troops as though I could raise them from the dust. I am driven to insanity with the distracting calls on the resourceless State. You are leader enough; there is no other. Kill the Chapala revolt for me and my gratitude is eternal. I send you thirty horsemen. You want more, but they are not to be had. Why? Because of mobs we have plenty, of armies none. The government has gotten itself mixed in a war with the United States. I, as every other State of the Republic, am sapped of troops. I create you captain of this band. Add what gendarmes you can. Strike quick, and I trust you."

Thirty men! Rodrigo scanned them with something like humor in his eyes. If he must be launched into a small war of his own — heigh-ho! — let us at it! His army was infinitesimal, but he recalled that Vicente's two hundred were nearly all foot. Forty-two horsemen, he believed, did they strike at once, fearlessly, would effectually paralyze the revolt; for they were well armed with sabres and short guns. He ordered a return to the lake. The men cheered him, and the gallop to Mescala was begun.

He who had been the leader of the thirty assumed, henceforth, a position somewhat like that of first lieutenant to Rodrigo. He was named Bonavidas. He was a large man, with very broad shoulders, but a frame exceedingly bony. His legs and arms were very long. The most striking detail of his appearance was a peculiar sickliness, even haggardness of countenance. He was at times frightfully pale, and breathed like one in exhaustion. His expression

was uncanny. These characteristics were all the more curious when it was seen that a good humor (somewhat infernal), expressed by a haggard smile, was his usual mood; and that he seemed ever powerful, more so, indeed, the more sickly was his face. Rodrigo studied this anomaly of a man as they rode. He believed he had here an ally such as he needed.

"Bonavidas," said he at last, "you do not look like a man to hunt fighting."

"If every other," said Bonavidas, smiling his ghostly smile, and expressing his eagerness by a flapping of his lank knees against the saddle, his mind characteristically lingering over the unclean thought, — "if every other be as lively a corpse as I, we shall soon be digging graves for the living."

They arrived, at some time between the hours of ten and eleven, at the ridge overlooking the lake. That beautiful expanse of water lay shimmering in the white light.

"A pretty place to spoil with trouble," said Bonavidas. "The shores are as handsome as the water. And what is that spot that lies out there in the middle?"

"An island," said Rodrigo. "And a spot haunted. There is never a Mexican thinks of the beauty of that; he dreams only of its ghosts and steers in the other direction. They say it is long since cursed, and the devil has it."

"An attractive idea," said Bonavidas. "What is on it?"

"Ruins of a Spanish prison," returned Rodrigo.

They had descended from the ridge's summit, and, for a time, the lake disappeared. They issued at last on its borders and made a short halt at

Mescala, where, the town being nearly deserted, it was found impossible to learn the number of those who had passed before; for the populace of the country districts are often found to be in total ignorance of numbers. A steady trot was then entered upon, which brought that small body of cavalry to the corn-covered plain about Ocotlan shortly before the sun, a red and fiery ball, touched the horizon's line.

Emerging into the wide road between the fields of grain, more than one eye detected the line of battle yonder under the walls of the town with the river before it. Rodrigo halted his men. The corn was not high, and the horsemen could see over its mile of extent. A sudden silence fell on them. They sat and scanned that opposing force for one short minute; then they looked at each other. Its extraordinary one day's growth astounded even Rodrigo. His face grew white, but he shut his jaws and flinched not. He saw a band of cavalry which seemed not greatly inferior to his own. Behind it, deployed in a single compact line, he perceived nearly eight hundred foot. He believed he detected Vicente's form, mounted, in front of the division of the left. The leader of the centre he did not recognize. On his enemy's right he saw a division headed by an enormous man whom he believed, yet could scarcely believe, to be the fisherman Fortino. He looked more closely, and decided it was he. He knew Fortino to be unskilled as a leader. That right division appeared, too, a trifle weaker than the others. Lastly, it was nearest the street's end leading into the town. Rodrigo swept the front with quick eyes, seized upon these facts, steeled his nerves, and made his plans at once.

He turned to his men, calmly, leisurely. He smiled a cool, humorous smile at them.

"Are you afraid?" said he.

Their awe at the superior force fled at once. They declared for the dash. He knew his dangers and his powers, but did not hesitate.

"We will meet the cavalry with a shock it will never forget," he commanded. "Ride, brothers, every one of you a demon. We will crush the horse. We then plunge through their right wing of infantry, cut it in two, and gain the street. We will then, with the protection of its narrowness, hold it against the entrance of the infantry, whose lines in a street can be no wider than are ours. Come; your lives and victory depend on crushing the horse, and one blow will do it."

He saw a wavering smile play over Bonavidas' pale face, and the relish that odd person had for this deed of danger was unmistakable. One minute only had been occupied in the survey. In one more the forty-two were deployed in corn-fields, the line's middle resting on the road.

The word of command was on Rodrigo's lips, but he did not utter it. He saw, in that moment, issuing from his enemy's ranks, a horse at whose saddle fluttered a crimson dress. It was Pepa, and he suddenly knew her. She dashed down into the stream and came on.

That unexpected movement had taken Vicente completely by surprise. He had tried to induce her to retire into the town. She had persisted in remaining on the field, though to the rear and out of the probable range of shots. Vicente, now absorbed in the concentration of his powers, was suddenly amazed to perceive that she had already

burst through the line of infantry at a point distant from him, and crossed the stream. She was a hundred yards to the front before he realized it. He called after her. He commanded her. He started away, spurring his horse, to force her back. He heard Quiroz's voice behind him cry:

"Let her alone! She will walk barefoot over burning hell before she die—let her!"

Vicente perceived that his enemy was waiting. He knew that only brute force and a disgraceful scene could make her return, even should he overtake her—and her horse was superior to his. He heard the army behind him burst into enthusiasm for her daring; knew that to hamper this their inspiration would be a military mistake. He realized that the fight was waiting on her; that his men had come to trust that this untamable woman carried with her her own safety. Chagrined, he was forced back. He, as Rodrigo, held his men and waited. His troops were shouting:

"Viva la Capitana! Viva la Capitana!"

The girl did not heed. Seeing she was not pursued, she suddenly slackened speed. She rode slowly on, her horse stepping proudly, majestically. She came in between the two fields of corn and halted not. Her black *rebozo's* ends waved behind her in the rising evening breeze. The last of the sunlight, piercing the field of grain, cast its horizontal beams on the red of her dress and barred it with lines of shadow, so that the crimson, as she went, flickered and flashed with a thousand intermittent rays of light. The tasselled stalks whispered and waved in air. She held the two forces motionless. Her eyes, deep burning, were bent before her. Blood suffused her face, and the ex-

citement, repressed, showed itself only in eyes and lips.

In the universal silence she came thus to a point half way between the two troops. She halted her horse and turned a little sidewise. She could see Rodrigo before her. She looked and saw Vicente behind her. Her face became suddenly bloodless, and the corn-fields seemed swaying and circling round her. She recovered herself, gathering her strength, and looked at the two ways. Their lengths were equal. Their widths and smoothness were the same. It was as far to Vicente as to Rodrigo—the one was to her right, the other to her left. The wide path through the fields led straight to either. She would not turn her horse east or west. He was champing his bit. She loosed the reins and let him have his will, her hand trembling as she did so. Even in her the spirit of gaming lived. She watched her steed with fear concentrated in her great eyes. He turned and went on in the direction she had been going. A delirium of haste seized her. She spurred him and dashed toward the horsemen of Rodrigo. She bent over, her face a face of flame, and urged him on. She drew up with a quick and reckless wheeling of her steed before the leader. He had advanced some ten paces to meet her. She looked at him haughtily, but her eyes spoke her spirit. She bent them on him and said, low:

“What is it you have for me?”

“Nothing,” said he, his face still whiter.

A wave of anger and shame burst on her. She shot a look of hate at him, wheeled, and dashed back so quickly that the troops who idolized her could not have known even that she had come so near the chief of their enemies.

She galloped toward the river, hearing the *jefe's* sharp cry of charge. She let her powerful horse put out all his speed and flew down toward Vicente's forces, the sound of the galloping cavalry behind ringing in her ears. She neared the stream and raised her hand high in air, crying:

"Follow me!"

She had one instant to knot her flying *rebozo* round her waist, leaving her head bare. Then she wheeled once more toward Rodrigo's advancing line.

It would have been well could Quiroz have held his horsemen on the stream's east bank, thus taking his enemy at a disadvantage when that enemy should cross and be forced to mount it. But Vicente saw the space between river and town to be too narrow; the cavalry was too close to the foot. Did it so remain the foot would be hampered by its presence. So, immediately on the charging of Rodrigo's men, he ordered a counter-charge of Quiroz's twenty-six.

They saw the girl, having come to the stream's opposite bank, turn to lead that charge. Doroteo and his horsemen dashed into the stream, across the gravel bed, up the other side, and followed her. Rodrigo's line had cut straight through the trampled grain. He held it compact and steady. He swung down toward the river with mighty force. He knew the value of one quick, projectile-like charge at a given point. Instinctively he adopted the tactics of Napoleon, of Greene, of Forrest. He swept out into the open plain between corn and stream with bursting speed.

The girl had fallen in with Quiroz's men. She was at Doroteo's side, wild as an animal, leading them on. The two bands fired volleys and then crashed together with terrific shock. It was hence-

forth a fight of sabres, knives, or pistols. The indiscriminate mass swayed for an instant to and fro. Horses and men went down. She was in the middle of it, fighting on, blindly, enraged. She scarce knew what she did. She believed she aimed her weapon more than once straight at that white leader who had cast her back. But he bore down untouched. His force pushed on irresistibly, cutting or crushing as it went. The inferior line of Quiroz slowly gave way, ground, as it were, over the course it had traversed. It fought with unabated fury. Quiroz's shrill cry, "Down with them! Down with the sons of Hell!" rang ever clear and high over the noise of battle. His men were hurled to the river's bank and down. Reduced in number they still fought on. Rodrigo's line crushed its slow way into the gravel bed and over it. He was losing men; he bore on, cutting his way with demoniacal desperation.

He tried to centre his powers on Quiroz, to slay that fierce fighter. But enchantment went with Quiroz. He seemed to feel, in the tempest's middle, a joy, a delight that was devilish. He held a long *machete*. His every blow was delivered with a coolness as great as were its power and speed. His eyes glittered like coals. He was yet pressed back. His line floundered for one instant in the waters of the stream, turned and dashed up the other bank. The girl was with it. Rodrigo's men, suffering here most severely, staggered up after, concentrated their power and still pressed on. It seemed they were cutting through solid iron, so marvellously did Quiroz hold his force together. But that force was crushed at last straight into the line of Fortino's right. There its leader made an

ultimate desperate effort. He held Rodrigo in check yet another minute. The *jefe* was gathering his strength for the final wheel to the left and a leap through the ranks of infantry.

That minute was enough. In it Vicente showed his cool head and the discipline he had ground into his two hundred. He was with that band on his line's left, whereas the fight of the cavalry was on the right. Rodrigo being for an instant checked by horse and foot, Vicente swung his two hundred round, like the spoke of a wheel on the hub of the centre. The machine-like precision of his men was proved. Rodrigo was caught, as it were, in the trap of an angle. Vicente's left poured a sudden deadly hail on his flank. The whole line was at once engaged. Pancho's centre, raw as they were, broke on the imprisoned *jefe*. The State's horsemen went down like grain in the field. Rodrigo, driven to his last madness, huddled the remnant of his torn force, called out the power of every nerve, gave the cry for the great burst, plunged like a maniac through horse and foot, knocked the charging Fortino half senseless with a blow from his empty weapon, cut through the panic-stricken right, as though his line had been a line of steel, dealt death about, left a bloody track behind, tore himself loose from his last antagonist, and galloped away into the town's street.

The battle, small as it was, had been inconceivably fierce and deadly. Vicente had shown, once for all, his coolness, his deep thought, his power over men, though he had so fearfully outnumbered his antagonist. The flank fire of his two hundred had done terrible execution, a fire and a movement directed with masterful genius. He had ridden up

and down his ranks, calm. He had no more heeded the storm of bullets than though it had been a storm of dust. He saw Fortino, after a brave dash, stagger back dazed. He saw the gray-bearded Pancho with a long wound opened on his cheek, and the blood trickling down the beard, drip, drip, with the flood that needs no haste. He perceived Bonavidas' ghastly countenance, haggard as death, but living with a cruel joy as he felled his antagonists with powerful arm. He poured in his fire, cut his enemy down, then saw that last charge of Rodrigo's remnant, — the bursting asunder of Fortino's right, and the escape.

Quiroz's decimated cavalry gathered itself together and dashed at the town in hot pursuit. The girl was already far in the lead, disappearing. The red ball of the sun had gone down. The lake had burned with its last fire and grown leaden. The night was coming quickly on. Rodrigo had not sufficient men remaining to make a stand, even in the street. He fled. That memorable battle was fought and won.

The gray-bearded Pancho, as the tumult ceased, fell dead from his steed. The stream and the stretch beyond and the space before the town were strewn with slain. Vicente had lost eighty-seven men, the scarcely conceivable, deadly effect of that infuriated band of penned-up cavalry. Out of the forty-one that had followed the bold dash of Rodrigo, but a dozen cut their final gash of blood through the crushed right and escaped. Such was the Battle of Ocotlan, told yet with bated breath in many a fisher's hut, remembered as a fight such as, for fierceness, the lake had never seen,— will never see again.

CHAPTER III

WITH the setting sun rose clouds in the east and south, and lightning over the southern mountains was answered by other lightning over the eastern. The rumblings of distant thunder told of the coming of one of those swift storms of rain and wind that at times follow the rainy seasons some weeks after the daily summer storms have ceased. The stony road from Mescala to Ocotlan, with the mountains to its one side and the darkening water to the other, was overcast with gloom, when there came along it toward the latter town a single traveller on foot.

The gloom was of that dull, weird kind that heavy clouds and a lingering bit of sunlight conspire to produce. It could not be many minutes till the way would be dark save for the lightning flashing on the road's rocks and the pedestrian moving among them. A wind came out of the south and crinkled all the lake, and heavy blue waves began to beat upon the shore. The wind caught the skirt of the traveller's dress and whipped it, a flash of pink when the lightning lit it, round young limbs.

She had seen the sun's red ball going down. She had heard, too, firing in the distance before her, whereat she had shuddered at the great burnt scar of red the sun made across the water's face. On a lonely spot of the shore near Mescala she had been frightened by the sudden apparition of a man loom-

ing from behind boulders, and had heard a boat grating on the sand. Naturally timid, she had scudded away in the light from that very path of red across the water, casting one glance behind her. That glance had revealed to her the man's face, lonely against a background of southern sky and clouds, a face about which the rising breeze blew strands of tangled hair, on whose forehead sat care or something worse, and across whose cheek a scar wrenched the features into an expression that seemed to her infernal. The sun's scar on the water was nothing to that. She ran. She came to a rocky angle of the road; turning to look again, the figure had disappeared. But she carried its effect with her.

The firing before her had not ceased. The sun's red was nearly gone before she heard it no more. She was afraid of the sound, and longed to know. Almost she would have preferred the presence of the bullets and the sight of the battle to this fearing uncertainty. She must hasten lest the night should lose her. The big empty world was a strange thing to her. What were all its vastness and its loneliness; its people, its lands, its battles? Only let her reach Ocotlan and find him living — what were all these things? It had been dark like this, and she had felt this sudden lostness once before, when they had carried away a body from her hut, and there had been no unrolling of the nets.

It was black night when she came to the river's bed, save for the flashes that lifted Ocotlan out of the blackness for her, and burnt its adobe walls. The clouds were over all the sky, and the measureless curtain of the coming rain, had it been day, would have been seen to hang, thick with torrents, over all the south-eastern lake, rolling nearer.

She could dimly see lights and people beyond the stream, and, to the right of the town, still farther, fires as of a camp. She found herself trembling, and went down into the bed of the stream. She fell against a great bulk lying on the pebbles. She groped to the right and the left, and fell against others. Despairing, she wanted to weep, but could not, and the lightning came and showed her that the bulks were horses lying dead. As the lightning went out, a white spot caught her eye. Whether it were a face she did not know, but she cried out smotheredly, and ran on by a way the light had shown her, straight through the narrow strip of water, and climbed up the other bank.

A little way further there were some torches of *ocote* flaring yellow, being carried slowly here and there. She came to them, and the bearers, speechless women from Ocotlan, saw her figure suddenly in their midst, the wind wrapping round her the skirts the stream had wet, and the flames showing the gold of her hair.

One of the women wailed and turned away, and there came another, searching, weeping, turning over bodies on the ground, and crying:

"Oh my Juan! My Juanito! My *niño*!"

The girl knew she was in the midst of the slain. She seized the arm of the crying woman and said:

"Where is the leader?"

"Heaven knows!" was the distracted reply.

Terrified at this, the girl ran on, dark shapes still about her, a groan there or a curse here. A ribald young female came staggering over the field with a torch and a rag of a flag. She was drunk and singing.

"Dead! all dead!" and she laughed and sang again. "My Cenobio left me! He's dead!" she cried, seizing the traveller's slim shoulder and leering horribly on her. "He went down — here!" And she thrust out a thin arm tragically and pointed to the field.

"Where is the leader, Vicente?" gasped the other.

"Vicente? Ha!" shrieked the first. "Oh, God help him!" She went staggering on among the fallen.

Shaking in every limb the traveller went toward the fires. She passed figures coming and going, and bodies carried. A part of the army was burying the dead. She came at length like a quick shadow or a leaf blown by the wind, to the long line of open air camps, where the rest of the troops, exhausted, cooked, or lay on blankets, or gambled with tossed pennies. She scanned the line. He was not there. She ran along it, her throat dry. She came at length to a row of adobe walls some yards in front of the camp. There was one fire here, and two men were seated on the ground leaning against the wall. They were Anastasio and Fortino. The relief at sight of them was so intense that, when she cried to them, it was half a cry, half a dry sob. She flung herself down beside them.

"Is Vicente dead?" she cried.

"No," said Anastasio, without emotion, straightening a long leg flat on the ground. "Why," he drawled, suddenly, a little surprised, "how did you get here?"

"I followed. Take me to Vicente."

"I think I can do that," muttered Fortino, in grim humor. "I can do something, if I can't hold a line of horse."

He arose and led the girl away remorsefully.

"Is my father killed?" she had asked of Anastasio.

"Oh Lord, no," drawled Anastasio.

Fortino took her into the town. He muttered all the way, deeply, subterraneously. They went some blocks in silence, she wrapping her *rebozo* closely round her head and shoulders.

"No," broke out Fortino, suddenly. "No, they're not dead. But it isn't any virtue of mine. I was knocked, I was. I am no man, girl. I am a burro."

His bitterness was great. Parties of hastening soldiers were scouring the streets and once or twice they saw where doors were being burst open.

"They're looking for the *jefe*," grunted Fortino, "the *jefe* it was my business to stop. He and his men broke through me and my drivelling right. They've found two of his men, and that's all they will find."

She said nothing to this. They came to a long, low house with eaves projecting on the street. The front was flush with the sidewalk, and the windows were barred with iron. A street-lamp showed carved lions' heads on the massive door. They show the place to this day as the house that lodged Vicente after the battle, number fifteen of the *Calle del Rio*; weather-beaten it is, with its many-colored plasterings falling off.

Fortino beat on the door with a noise that the thunder answered, for the storm was over the town. It was opened and she was let in, and Fortino, mumbling, went away. The first drops of the torrent fell on her blue *rebozo* before she entered.

Vicente was with the clergy on that night. The battle was called a victory, though the leader was chagrined that the *jefe* had escaped him. The

meaning of the fight and the plans of the next movements were to be discussed in a parley in this, the house of a priest, over whose low, flat roof loomed the towers of a church. They were waiting, too, in vain, for news of the capture of the fugitives. It was the priest himself who had cautiously opened the door to the girl. When he learned who she was he admitted her and closed it. His full face suggested a deep but suppressed glee, and in his long *sotana* he led her, rubbing his hands nervously together as he went, along corridors, round a *patio*, to a large rear room. Vicente was there alone. They had brought into that room one of those pot-like portable *braseros*, that he might dry his garments by it; for in the manœuvering of the fight he had dashed more than once through the stream. The brasier sat now in a corner on the brick floor, its bed of live coals casting out a red glare. There was a candle on the ledge of a deep window whereof the inner wooden shutters were closed and barred.

She arrived at the room's door and the priest left her. A delight that was agitation filled her as she came timidly in. Her face was beautiful in that moment, and wonderfully lit. The suspense was done.

"Vicente!" she cried, and sank forward, shaking and sobbing.

"My faithful one!" said he, when his first astonishment was over, holding her and making her dry her dress over the coals, "if only the whole cause had your spirit in it! But why did you come? I left you safe. Pepita's mother promised me only this morning that you should be cared for. War is not for you."

"I was lonely," said she; "and, Vicente, I am a woman now."

He looked her over. She was, indeed, at seventeen a woman. Her form had grown slightly fuller than it was in the old days. Her face, too, was a woman's face, for all its youth and its dimples and the glistening hair about it. It held in it a dreaminess that made it almost sad. He told her so with a pang in his heart.

"No, no!" she cried, smiling at him. "Not with you. I was always happy with you. Vicente, I could n't stay — I could n't be away when you were here. There is n't anything there any more; and the very sight of the nets and the house made me unhappy."

"But what can this bloody war, child, have to do with you?"

"I can follow you — let me! Oh, I am so lonely! And if you are — if it goes wrong with you — I can take care of you then!"

He caught her to his arms where she came willingly, and the candle-light lit moisture in his eye. He sat down on a chair still holding her.

"Little girl," said he, looking into the bed of coals, "do you not know how, in all the struggle and the fear, I remember and keep you as the bright spot behind, whither I shall return? Where all is fierceness I remember you as gentleness. Look," stretching out his hand and pointing to the fire, "I can see it all, merely looking at the coals. There is your face, luminous. Some love will come to you some day, now that you are a woman, and it will light your face like that. There is the beach, too, and the hut with its poor little thatch. Why, Clarita, if I were in the blackest dungeon I could still see the waves that we played by, and feel the spray, and the west wind, and my sister's hair tangled by it and blown like dull gold damply over my face."

She could not answer him. After a pause he continued :

"And this is why I do not want you to follow me, that I may run no risk of losing you. Your poor feet have come a long way."

She put one of them out and looked at it and laughed at him a little.

"They are very well," said she.

They were small, encased in the rough shoes that the Chapala cobbler made. The shoes were worn, damp, and discolored with the journey.

"Surely those little things," said he, "will not bear much. You should be at home. It is better than this; and I know you have, under your gentleness, a strength." He smiled. "We used to call you stubborn. You would so persist in doing that which you wanted to do. You can care for yourself till a better time. Your old stubbornness will not make you follow me. And if the day comes when these dreams are realities, what will you have me do for you then?"

"Only so have it," said she, "that you shall not have to go away any more. It is very great, Vicente, to be as you are. You are not like other men."

"No, it is not great; would that I could make it so. If I should die now, Clarita, I should be called only an adventurer. Scarcely a star, girl, shines on a path like mine. One victory cannot blind me to the dark days to come. I may die like the others, for having lifted up my voice and desired something different. The world seems ever to hate him who disturbs its repose."

She clasped her fingers together over the charcoal and bent down till its red glare made her face like flame.

"Oh!" she cried, "that I too might stay with you!"

"Why," said he, laughing gently, "you are the calm over it all. And you will go back and wait till the waves are still."

She thought in silence.

"Yes," she sighed after a time, "I will go back. But it is with sorrow, and only because you wish it. I shall not be happy. And—I do not like it there any more," she added with odd simplicity. "And I do not like Pepa's mother. And Pepa—where is she? Vicente, I want to say something to you."

"Say on," said he.

"I—I am afraid of Pepa."

His face darkened.

"Why?" asked he.

"Not for myself. She is good to me—but—I am afraid of her for you."

"She did a brave thing to-day," said he. "She rode out between the two ranks, straight into the enemy. She is like a dream in the night. She stirs my heart strangely, yet I cannot truly know her. She rode slowly, daring them. She made them halt, and gave us every opportunity to take in their number and more fully to prepare; and afterward she turned and galloped back and led the charge."

His face grew much darker as he spoke. She was interested but little.

"Yes," she said gloomily; "yes, that is like Pepa."

"But you are afraid of her?"

She clasped his arm and repeated it.

"I am afraid of Pepa. I do not know; there is something that makes me afraid."

"Well," he said after a long pause, "maybe there is, child."

They spoke yet a little while of other things. The storm had broken and was warring outside. The terror of the battle and the gloom of the field she had passed through were over her, and she shuddered.

"Early in the morning," said he, "there departs a *canoa* from here for Chapala. It is a boat of a friend of the priest. He will carry letters to Chapala, and you shall go with him. You will be safe and the journey will be easy. The army is not for you."

He gave her his bed, which stood in the room's corner, kissed her good-night, and left her. She sat long looking into the dying fire, hearing thunder and rain in torrents without, and afterward dropped her head to her hands on her knees and the tears ran down on the pink of the dress. Then she went to bed and slept.

Fortino had returned slowly to the point where she had found him. He had taken no interest in the silent seekers after fugitives, the occasional flashing of a torch round a dark corner. He believed the remnant of the enemy had galloped away out of the town; indeed it was known that some had so done.

"They've caught two!" cried a friend, running past him.

"Eh?" said Fortino; "two;" and went on ill-humoredly. "And the rest may be in Heaven or Hell. They are n't here, oh Saint Gregory!"

He came to the outskirts and thence to the wall where his two companions were, and the isolated camp fire flickered and smoked. The rain was coming on with more violence, and sputtered and hissed on the coals. Anastasio was seated under the shelter of thatched eaves that hung out from the wall. He had his sombrero down over his eyes, his lank knees close to his face, his lank arms wrapped

round them. His red blanket, for further protection, was wound all about his body, his neck, and his chin. He was the picture of indolence. Off to the left were the other camps, surprised by the rain, the fires dying out, the men huddled together. To the right were still the torches flaring over dead bodies.

Fortino, too, sat down by the fire in the shelter of the eaves. The rain, coming from behind them, left this spot comparatively dry. When the full torrent broke, Francisco came dashing from the field of the slain, his blanket fluttering in the wind and his sandals clapping out sharp slaps on the wet earth. He leaped in under the eaves.

"What, you old figure-head!" cried he in an impertinent bantering to Fortino. "You who lead and fight like a lame cock! Oh your battle! Ha! ha! Ha! ha!" and he slapped his leg with vigor. "Villain, you were chaff in the wind. The first big wave went right over your head as though your bristles were grass on a sandy marsh. Take a lesson from *me*. I would inspire a rock with recklessness, I would. Men, did you see me? I was the stiffest feather in your right wing, was I!"

"And you beat more air than all the rest of them," observed Anastasio, slowly crossing his legs another way, "I'll wager you that, and were easily first when the wing flew."

"Let remorse have its own way in me, fellow," put in Fortino gloomily. "I am no soldier, eh? Nor a bellows either."

Anastasio cast a pensive eye out into the rain and the night, toward the field of the slain.

"Where are they, Francisco?" said he. "Where are the spoils?"

"They are out there," replied the other, shaking

his head and staring, too, into the rain. "St. Francis, it is creepy, this spoils. Now if it were day — Friends, there is a bad atmosphere hangs over the spoils. I moved a little in that direction. *Amigos mios*, it seems to me doubtful that spoils are made for the night. Spoils are a creature of the day-time. Now I tell you I would do it — I came near doing it — I could bring myself round to it, if — Fellows, I am a man of deep sympathies and stirrings of the bosom."

"You would rather take your spoils from a live man," suggested Anastasio. "Yet if I did not know the stirrings of your bosom made it flabby in the matter of courage, I should say you had some dead fellow's coins under your blanket."

"I am afraid of nothing," cried the hot Francisco, "under the whole course of the sun. Yet even a vigorous coward were something to have faith in, and better than a cow of a man who chews his cud during battle. What did Anastasio do? By my soul's salvation, he sat the ground cross-legged during the fight. When the enemy was coming on I heard a wheezing sigh some feet over my head. I turned and it was this tall animal commencing to bend himself down and arranging his legs. He sat himself on the hard ground, he did, in the midst of us, cross-legged. And he turned loose his weapon in that condition. And when they came rushing on us and had us fighting them like bees round our heads, there was this long strip of human flesh, lazy as a woman, by my soul, in the midst of them, shooting straight up."

"This was on account of my coolness, brother," said Anastasio. "I was remarkably cool during the fight. I distinctly recall stopping a moment to put

my blanket over my mouth to keep out the poison of the coming night air. For I sometimes have a cough. Besides, that is my way of going into battle. I go into it sitting down, and my theory of the fight is that the rest ought to do likewise. You call your line up in a long row and you make them sit down, cross-legged for them to whom it is more comfortable. And when the enemy comes charging on you, forbid a rise, but have the firing done as they are. Thus is there no danger of a rout. No soldier, lest he disobey orders, can run away, for he cannot run sitting and to get up is to disobey orders, whereafter he knows he will be shot. These are my theories of a battle."

Anastasio's vocabulary was frequently a matter of awe to his companions. There was much silence and consideration after this speech.

"No doubt," said Francisco, venturing a straining of his own vocabulary and speaking weightily, "it is a way to gain momentum."

"You," replied Anastasio taking him up, "you don't know what momentum is."

To which Francisco warmly retorted:

"I know the Castilian tongue, señor, *and* its meanings. There are some who know nothing but the tongue. There are some who are all tongue. Momentum is this: A bull in a field is made mad by an agitation of the blanket, so. He comes at you, his tail whizzing and his eyes shut. You leap behind a very large rock, thus, the rock happening to be in the field where the bull is. The bull, having got force as he came on, finds himself unable to stop the movement of his body and he smashes as though he were glass, on the rock, horns first. *Si*, señor, and what was it smashed him?" Here Francisco empha-

sized matters with a sweep of his hand. "It was *the momentum in the rock!*"

"It is a very hard metal," said Fortino, who had not listened to much of the discourse. "There are veins of it among the Triquis. The Triquis mine it and carry it to the west coast, and it is shipped north, where they tell me there is a nation of madmen."

"There is that," said Francisco, "a nation that speaks foolishly a language that nobody can understand. They are white and their country is as big as all Mexico or bigger, so I am told. They have large cities, too, of madmen. And those that chance to be born of a sane mind are made crazy by the rest before they come of a good age, that harmony may be preserved."

"A good national policy," said Fortino; "a wisdom worthy even of a right-minded people."

They had sat for some time in silence when Doro-teo came round the corner and entered banteringly into conversation with them. Pursuing a course of clever flattery which he knew too well how to use, he presently drew Fortino aside, and, with his fingers on the giant's arm, whispered to him of Pepa. She had not been seen since the fight. Fortino could furnish no information of her. It was then that Quiroz unburdened himself to his big listener. He told him plainly of his passion for the girl, his love of the bloody game they were playing, a love trebled by the stake he had set before him in the person of Josefa Aranja. When he finally left Fortino, not only had he soothed that remorseful man's heart by praise of his fighting — he had done another thing. He had secured a promise that, did it ever chance in battle that Pepa were cut down and in danger, For-

tino would seize the young tigress by brute force and carry her off the field to await the coming of Quiroz. This agreed, the adroit Doroteo moved noiselessly away. Fortino turned to his companions. They prepared for the night.

"Where is la capitana?" inquired Francisco, completely burying himself in his blanket.

"She is doubtless," said Anastasio slowly, "in a church somewhere, praying."

And he stretched himself at a marvellous length on the ground. The storm was only beginning to abate, and ere long the three of them were answering its thunders with their snores.

Early in the morning the priest in the house that lodged Vicente and his sister, came to Clarita's door and awakened her. She could not see Vicente; he was already out with his troops. She dressed herself and was given into the charge of the man in whose *canoa* she was to be a passenger. She left the priest still rubbing his hands most heartily, and went away to the lake. The storm had gone by and the sun rose clear; all the world was fresh and glistening with the clinging drops of rain, and the morning breeze came cool out of the mountains. They found the *canoa* riding at anchor some distance out. She was lifted to a sailor's back and carried through sparkling water. When all was ready a sail was hoisted.

She stood in the bow looking back at the town. The soldiers were far to her right, seemingly preparing to move. Vicente she could not distinguish. A white-clothed, bare-legged sailor sat in the stern at the wooden rudder. Another sprawled under the boat's thatch on the floor. Still a third lay high up at the prow over the water and sang a lazy, melan-

choly tune to himself, a song of the Señora, the Señorita, the love that was not love but hate, the happiness that was not joy, but death. Before night the mountains back of Chapala and the two white towers under them rose high over the boat's bow.

CHAPTER IV

AS Don Rodrigo and his men dashed through the right wing and into the town, a last shot following them wounded the *jefe's* horse. The *jefe* himself was unhurt. There were twelve of his band left. White with rage he spurred his animal on with what vigor he could muster. Quiroz's cavalry not having been, in the last of the fight, very well consolidated, and not expecting this dash for the town, was not so rapid at following as it might otherwise have been. Smothering his chagrin as best he could, though taking a fierce delight in the memory of that scythe-like sweep through opposing ranks, Rodrigo huddled his flying band as close together as possible, decided on a tortuous gallop through the narrow streets, an exit on the far side of Ocotlan, and a dash for the mountains — thence escape if not pursued; if pursued, it could be but by the enemy's little cavalry, and he only prayed it might follow him. With what keen delight would he burn in cutting down that no more than equal foe! Once away, he swore he would yet raise an army that would down this rebellion. The crooked, lane-like quality of the town's streets, the fast-coming night whose shadows were already thick between the rows of low adobe buildings, aided the flight.

This was all well enough thus mapped out. Unfortunately there was a bullet in his horse. They were in the midst of the town, circling in deep alleys,

cutting a secret, swift path out of the coming night, when he felt his beast waver, quiver under him. He spurred the poor animal on, and it dashed with the rest yet another crooked block. Then it suddenly reeled and fell flat, giving its dexterous rider barely time to leap in safety to the ground. And that rider knew his enemy was pursuing him, misled by the darkness and unreadiness and by the irregular lanes of the town, but not distant.

This spot where his horse fell was in a little side cut across half vacant lots, where thatched huts stood placed at random. The way was lined with a long double hedge of some thickly growing tropical plant, and by the deep foliage of rows of mango trees. The lane was a narrow shaft of dense green. The wavering of his steed had made him, ere this, last of his band. The rest, save Bonavidas and two others, were far gone when the beast came down and died.

"Up behind me! Quick! Quick!" cried Bonavidas, breathing heavily and wheeling his horse to Rodrigo's side. The two others, weapons out, waited with impatience.

"Go on — never mind me!" cried the *jefe*. "That would be but to give both of us up. Go on, I tell you!"

"We won't leave the captain," said they surlily.

"Go on, I tell you — I command you! Bonavidas, the rest need you more than I. In the name of God, fellows, go on! I know a sure refuge. I will join you on the Guadalajara road!"

Bonavidas, being somewhat of a grim philosopher, dashed off and was gone. The others lingered yet a moment, which moment cost them dearly. They were ordered, pleaded with by the *jefe*, and finally left him. They failed to overtake their comrades. They

were halted some distance beyond the plaza, cornered and captured by Doroteo and some others. Their comrades were off, galloping across fields, thence into a rocky road, thence to safety.

Of the pursuers, the most ready and the leader had been the girl. She had turned her horse loose after them, and he was the best animal in Vicente's forces. She heard behind her Doroteo's curses and order of pursuit, and her comrades coming. She was far in advance of them, and wheeled the corner of adobe walls into the first street but little behind Rodrigo and his men. She leaned far forward, urging on her steed. Her enemy did not gain ground before her, nor, though she might have done so, did she gain on him. Those quick turns and circuits that the pursued made in the dusk, she too made in following. Her eyes were bent always to the front that she might not lose him in the shades. She lost her *rebozo* in that wild gallop. The long, soft cloth floated away behind her on a breeze and fell over the head of a naked and terrified boy, who, with other townspeople, was scampering away to the safety of a hut. That *rebozo* hangs to this day in a church at Ocotlan, wonderful prodigy from the heavens, miracle dropped by the Holy Virgin into the streets. It is framed in gold; and the priest of the church, an old man, is he who was the naked boy, and on whom Blessed Mary let fall this not-to-be-mistaken or disregarded summons out of the clear sky.

When the *jefe's* men came to those groves of mango trees, and wheeled into the little lane whose shadows were already night and whose shaft of narrow green, like a tunnel, was a shaft of black, Pepa wheeled after them. What was that wavering of beast before her? Her heart bounded and seemed

to stop. She drew her own horse to a quick halt, close under the overhanging arms of the trees. She could barely see the tottering shadow some yards to the fore. She heard the thud when the carcass fell, and a quick, smothered exclamation in a voice she knew. She was on the ground at once, silent, leading her steed with the caution of her Indian ancestors, closer, closer. She kept well under the thick foliage of the mangos. She could not have been seen. A few moments more, and those before her, in less of the shadow, were but scarcely distinguished forms. She stopped twenty yards from them, heard the little colloquy, and perceived that he was left there alone. While she assimilated all this, Doroteo and his men were passing in eager haste by the opening of the lane. They did not even see that opening, the trees at that point nearly meeting over the narrow path between. The pursuers had gone by with a sweep of wind and dust, and the lane was left in the deep, living silence of a summer night.

Rodrigo had crept through the foliage at the path's side, and lain flat on the ground; the girl stood motionless, straining every nerve that she might know what he did. When silence came again, he crept back slowly, cautiously. She could hear twigs crackle, and finally, when he reached the path and stood up, she could barely see his form. He thought himself alone. The blood rushed to her head. She found herself trembling to think how easily she could kill him. Something savage in her leaped up, and she pictured his death. But she laughed inwardly at herself, and put the vision away.

"Pepa, thou fool," she said, "it must go beyond this—to despair, before thou canst do that."

She let him go on till he was yet farther away.

Then she tied her horse to the trees and went after him, as silent as he. Before he reached the end of the lane, he crept through the foliage again to the opposite side. She was fearful of losing sight of him, and crept through quickly where she was. She found herself in one of those marvellous, yet common groves of unnumbered Mexican fruits; where the deep black shadow of the mango still reared itself; where the orange and the *toronja*, the *cidra*, and the lemon, hung their unseen globes; where the *papaya* lifted its long stem and its picture-book clusters of leaves against the sky; where the *huele-de-noche* loaded and sickened the air with that ravishing scent too sacred for the day.

There was a hut on the far side and a candle burning in its doorway. Beyond the hut was another lane leading into a more prominent street, and the plaza was not far distant. A certain Mexican boy of seventeen years was considerably astonished before eight o'clock of that night, in this very grove. He was emptying charcoal from a basket to the ground at the hut's door. He was wrapped in a blanket and wore a common straw sombrero. He saw no shadows out under the trees but the trees' shadows. But another that fell from no tree came stealthily up behind him. The charcoal was falling rattlingly, dustily to the earth, when the boy felt a blow that seemed to burst every blood-vessel in his head, on the side of that member. After reeling and half sitting, half falling down, he gained his senses. His blanket and his hat were gone.

At night, and particularly if there be dampness or the suggestions of rain in air or sky, the Mexican peon covers all of his face but his eyes with his blanket.

He wraps the whole upper half of him in that garment. He has an idea, inherited with solemn belief from many generations, that there is poison in night air. He will sleep by dozens in one room piled thick with snoring human bodies, with all doors and windows tightly shut to keep out the foul poison of a pure night breeze, nowhere purer and sweeter than on the Mexican tableland, and breathe as he sleeps the nauseous exhalations of his slumbering family and their cousins and their mistresses and friends. And he will arise refreshed, let the heavy chemicals of his night's lodgings like a fog of disease out into a clear morning, and congratulate himself on his sanitary circumspection. This night was cooled by a damp breeze from the lake. Lightning and thunder bespoke coming rain. Hence when the scurrying, frightened, questioning inhabitants of the surrendered town of Ocotlan beheld a man wrapped to his eyes in a blanket and shaded to his nose with a straw sombrero, walking with calm, majestic tread through the street's shadows as any Mexican walks, they recognized only the customary precautions of their race. A girl some distance behind him attracted more attention; and some even knew who she was.

That walk was short. Two blocks from the plaza was the house of the *presidente*, — he who had surrendered the town much against his will. He was not unknown to Don Rodrigo. The house was subsequently torn down. There is a *meson* standing there now. It was built round the usual inner court, but had a long, narrow strip of garden, with fruit trees, extending from this court through the block to a rear street. This garden was lined along both sides with stalls for horses.

The muffled man came to the rear street and the

entrance of the garden. He was cautious again, but this street was very shadowed. At a corner some distance away an oil lamp hung from the middle of a wire stretched from one side of the thoroughfare to the other, which lamp gave a little light. The man wheeled suddenly through a wooden door that gave passage to the inner side of a wall which closed this end of the *presidente's* garden. He had been within four seconds when the girl slid through after him, scarcely seeming to open the door at all. She found a way of barring it after her. As she entered, there was a hubbub of voices in another street, coming toward the lamp, and the resinous torches of a hurrying party of armed seekers flared round the corner. She heard them come nearer, and stood holding her breath. They were her friends, her adorers. She crouched down and hid, and they passed on, bent on some other destination.

She arose, and went on up the narrow garden and knelt again and crawled. She was among cabbages and *chayotes*. She crept closer, closer between the lines of stables, and came to another high wooden door which, through another adobe wall, led into the *patio* of the *presidente's* house. She had seen it open (letting through a faint light and a glimpse of trees, wide verandas, and a room door) and close again as Rodrigo passed stealthily on. She came to it, but did not dare to enter. She lay down with her eye at a crack of some breadth that was beneath the door.

Rodrigo, still swathed, crossed under trees, and by a tinkling fountain in the *patio*, and entered under the low, tiled roof of a broad *corredor*, brick floored. To his right and behind were a kitchen, cooks moving about over charcoal fires, and a *mozo* cleaning

pots. Before him was a half-opened door leading into a room where a light burned.

He knocked, and the *presidente* came to the door. The *presidente* was a fat, bustling, nervous little man. He was sore perplexed and exasperated. He peered up at Rodrigo, and Rodrigo removed the blanket and the hat and smiled a curious smile on the *presidente*, whereat the latter started back with an exclamation.

"What!" cried he, with many colors and suffocated. "You! You! Oh, Dios! My Lady of the Remedies! Come in! Nay, nay — stay out — go away! Hide yourself here. I will hide you! I will not hide you! Madness! Enriqueta! My wife! My wife!"

Enriqueta, with a candle and a low dress that showed an ample neck, came running out. She was quizzical, critical.

"Who is it? Who is this man?" gasped Enriqueta.

"Your husband knows me," said Rodrigo, little able to brook this delay in the hiding, but amused in spite of it, "and that I need protection. God grant I be worthy of it. My friend" — and he turned in a most confiding way to the *presidente* — "a few hours of concealment, a horse in the early dawn — ah — I see your heart warms to it. Heaven be thanked, I have fallen among friends!"

With incoherency, dashing sentences, shattered exclamations, the *presidente*, stepping about all the time as though every spot on the floor burnt his feet, explained to his wife.

"Sir," said she, with infinite and severe, though agitated propriety, "this house has daughters, innocent young things, brought up in the customs of Spain. You cannot be in the company of my daughters. Oh, José, my husband! What will we do with

our girls? They are kept most carefully from men. Oh, skies of the morning! A man in the same house! Help me, oh, my faith! in this matter. Sir, this has never happened before. In this land men see not young ladies in their own house. Never has a male youth so much as passed the door. And I will declare, sir, that only one of my daughters has so much as a *novio*, and him she has had but three weeks,—and whether he means it or not the Lord knows, though he has honored my daughter by standing every night of the three weeks under her balcony; and I have seen him sigh in a way that an old lady like me cannot misinterpret. But it shall be months before we let him in, and then only when he has given us every assurance of honorable intentions, and it shall be in the presence of her mother. I am sure I do not know what I shall do. Oh, my girls! Oh, my guarded offspring; guarded like jewels! My husband, I cannot solve this unless you put him in Juan, the *mozo's* room, yonder by the garden door. And, José! José! have a care for the ancient Castilian sanctity,—and you can lock him in!”

“We can lock in the sanctity, Enriqueta, better. Let it be the sanctity that is locked in!”

Enriqueta gave a slight shriek as the two crossed the *patio* in stealthy haste, and dived in to guard her brood. One of the latter was peering out of the door, and was speedily hustled away.

“Look not on him!” cried she. “In the very house! Oh a most beautiful young man—a most handsome one! Cobita, my love, come away! I am all trembling. There will something come of this!”

The rain was beginning to drop in a desultory way when Don Rodrigo entered his room. Outside the

garden gate still lay the girl. She watched through the crack till some minutes after there was anything to see. The nervous *presidente* had returned to the front part of his house and shut himself and his family in. She arose then, and, assuring herself that there was no lock on this door, only a wooden bar with its peg running through to the side toward the garden, she went back among the vegetables to the street. This street door had a lock with a monstrous iron key sticking in it. She stole the key. She went, then, out of the garden and retraced her course to the lane of mangos. She secured her horse and led him to a *mason*. She next proceeded to a store and bought a *rebozo*. It was a half-hour later, and in a rain now somewhat disagreeable, that, having skillfully avoided the eyes of the townspeople, she returned to the garden. The thunder was hammering viciously at the night. A little while more, she knew, and torrents would be upon her. She put damp fingers on the garden door and pushed it. It was not fastened.

The terrified *presidente* was too careful of his own safety to do else than remain in the house. He would fasten nothing. If it became proved that the refugee was there, why, it would be plain the *presidente* had done nothing to hide him — the *jefe* had slipped in unawares to the *presidente*. The *presidente* had not so much as taken the care to lock the door. Hence, innocent would the *presidente* be. "Furthermore, Enriqueta, my love," had the fearful soul explained, snugly enough tucked in bed as he was, "let the way of escape be open; Mary be with me and rid me of this burden, the sooner the better. Lock him in these my grounds?" The virtuous Enriqueta had suggested some such thing, with the

seeming desire of keeping this jeopardizer of the safety of her daughters in more unquestionable security. "No, Enriqueta; give him every opportunity to take his compromising presence away at any moment. He knows where my horses are, in the stalls by the cabbages. If he steals one and runs away (and so, Enriqueta, I have explained to him), it is no business or fault of mine; it is an unfortunate theft, God help us!"

The good official had retired immediately after the harrowing event of the fugitive's arrival. He had completely undressed and been wrapped with care in blankets. It was part of the worthy man's plot to be snoring with innocent violence whatever else happened in the rear of his premises.

Pepa, perceiving there was no one else in the street, entered the door, closed and locked it after her, and put the key under her *rebozo*. It was quite dark here save for the occasional lightning. She crept again among the stalls to the *patio* door. She listened at the stables and heard the munching of horses in the dark. At the *patio* door she lay down again and peered under. She was somewhat surprised at what she saw. The *patio* was dark, as was all of the house but the kitchen. Out of a door of that last apartment she perceived the *presidente's* virtuous wife stealthily creeping with a candle in her hand. The servants seemed to have departed. Doña Enriqueta's face, full of a terrified, secret eagerness, was lit white by the light; her ample and bare neck exposed itself to the wanton air of night; her dress skirt, having been removed, left her underskirt (of a very startling stripe it was) free to display fat ankles not stockinged. In the lady's other hand she carried a covered dish.

This apparition cautiously crossed the court. It stopped in the middle of it as though hearing a noise. It went on more cautiously. The good señora was like a thief in her own house. The door of the *mozo's* room, whereto the fugitive had been led, was on the *patio's* opposite side under the wide low roof of the *corredor*, and not far from the spot where lay Pepa, haughtily amused, ill sheltered from the rain, looking through the crack. The apparition came in under the *corredor's* roof, tiptoe. The lady arrived, scared and trembling, with her face drawn into an expression of guilty trepidation, at the door of Don Rodrigo's room. She kneeled down, whereupon the lack of stockings became to Pepa the most evident testimony of her presence, and she placed the dish on the floor by the door; whereon, the dish rattling a trifle, she became much agitated and knocked with no composure.

"Who's there!" said a voice within, a voice disguised.

"I, señor, I!" faltered she. "Here is food; and oh! for God's sake tell not my husband, nor come near my daughters!"

At this she was up, candle in hand, dashing in a panic along the *corredor* to the door that led to her lord and master, and her white ankles twinkled plumply away. That door was closed and the open court with its tinkling fountain and the wide tiled *corredores* were deserted. At that moment there was a burst of thunder and the torrent, long promised, came tumbling down. The girl arose and wrapped herself more closely in the *rebozo*.

"Well," said she, "I do not have to stand this."

So she slipped into the *patio* and under the shelter of the tiled roof by Rodrigo's door. She had just

arrived when he slowly opened it, and, not seeing her, took up the dish in silence.

"*Buenas noches!*" said she, appearing suddenly before him with the bright smile of a pleasant call. "I shall come in if you please!"

His muscles from his head to his feet stiffened, and he all but dropped the dish. He stood speechless for a moment, then he knew he must face it out. So he put back a wave of brown hair off his forehead and smiled in mock cordiality.

"No one more welcome," said he.

They went in and he shut the door.

"Is there a lock to it?" said she, carelessly, turning about and looking with polite interest at the iron fasteners.

"Ah, no," he replied, himself looking all over the door. "It seems I am not—not rude enough to have a lock. Sit down. My house, as the saying is, is your house."

There was only one chair in the room, and nothing else but a piece of matting on which the *mozo* had been accustomed to sleep, and a candle on the brick floor. Rodrigo set the dish on the floor likewise, bowed her to the chair, and she sat down in great comfort. Then she took out the big key to the garden gate and played with it on her lap. They looked at each other for fully a minute in silence, he standing. He believed he knew something of the possibilities of this girl's nature. She was with his enemy; she had fought against him to kill him. She had discovered his hiding-place; she had a key. He did not know that key, but she played with it in such an insinuating way that he guessed at once what it was. The situation for him was sufficiently tragic. But he expressed no such knowledge in his

face, waiting for her to say something; and there she sat, looking up at him with a most meaning composure. She suddenly laughed at him a little girlish laugh.

"The señorita sees fit to be amused," said he, leaning against the wall.

"It was great sport," said she. "Oh, I love to fight!"

"You did well," said he.

"And you," she replied with politeness.

There was a pause.

"Your charge into Fortino's ranks," she continued, "I liked that very much."

"And I too," was his reply, a little coldly. Such conversation annoyed and angered him. His spirit was too sincere to carry this on very long, and his nerves were strained to a great tension. Who else knew his whereabouts? How soon might this beautiful devil take it into her head to call her soldiers? — after which, prisons or death.

"Yes," said he, "I, too, was pleased with all that."

How bitterly it rankled in his free heart he did not say; nor his grief over every one of his comrades that fell.

"If I had thought of it at all," she replied, "I should certainly have expected to be shot." She considered this some time. "The fire was so fierce and I in the front of it. It is, after all, strange that I came out unhurt."

"That is simple enough," said he.

She turned quickly and looked at him.

"So?" said she, and kicked out her little foot. Her face was fascinating.

"Simple enough," he repeated, looking at the

candle-light that was growing dimmer for want of attention.

"How is that? How is it so simple?" asked she.

"Because I ordered," he replied, and paused, stooped down, and snuffed the candle with his bare fingers, which were burnt painfully by the operation. "I ordered," continued he in that position, "that they should not shoot at you."

Her face lost its calmness and its roguishness and much of its color. She stared at him long, her eyes unfathomable. She arose suddenly with much hauteur. There was no doubt of the sincerity of what she now uttered.

"Yes," she said, "that is it. I am a girl — I am a weak woman. Call me, then, a lunatic, and have it done; for to be wild and foolish as I am, and yet weak, that is to be mad. If I am to prove only that I can do nothing — Don Rodrigo, I prefer to have your cursed bullets in me."

The emotion that was rarely, rarely absent from this girl, was beating up higher and plain.

"It was not because I underestimate your daring or your purposes, or fail to value the nature that makes you the unusual woman that you are," said he, "that I gave the order. It was — well, let me say, for old times."

"And this reward," she said, bitterly, "only wounds me. I have amused you, is it so, in certain days gone by? A girl comes into battle and you chance to recall the fact. You will be affable. There is nothing in it but that. You come from another nation, a superior nation, a nation, no doubt, whose soul is as white as the faces of its people, a nation cold, steely. And I am weak, out of a passionate nation, one that, having seen fire, must leap in.

And me and mine you hate. It is nothing that we can follow one thought into the grave, one purpose into the mouth of hell. This to the nation that coldly moves to material ends is nothing. I would have given you a thousand times greater thanks, had you told your men to tear me, me first, to the earth and let every horse crush me as he passed."

"And this, to you," he said, "would have been the highest way to answer you when you asked me what I had for you? This would have been no answer. Do you think I do not know that you play with fire as a child with sand — are capable of any deed that your body is strong enough to carry out? You come to me here to-night and prove it, which proof I do not like. Are war and death and this infernal torture of my defeat only things to be chatted about as people chat while the band plays in the plaza—that you come and talk it over as though it had been a bull-fight or a game of ball wherein we had chanced to be antagonists?"

"And this is the way you take it?" said she, standing looking at him fairly. "I am cold and heartless; I can speak of battles like bull-fights. My blood never leaps—my heart never burns or aches—I cannot understand the meaning of death. No; I am come of a savage ancestry that slew human sacrifices to stone gods. And even now, doubtless, to you the wildcat is degrading herself. She is piqued, she pleads for old days; she would call up promises. I am not such," she said sadly. "Promise there is none. You never said, I love you — neither did I. I have hated you oftener. I have come merely to see, to have it burnt into me, how you look on me — because I am capricious, not to be trusted, liking to do odd things and have power,

liking to look here on the key that locks the garden-gate and to remember that the adobe wall is fifteen feet in height."

"And you lose sight of the most prominent fact, that you are in the ranks of my enemies. An hour hence, when you are tired of playing with me or when I have unwittingly piqued you some other way, you may give me over to those who seek me."

"Unless you kill me first," said she. "No other knows of your presence here. If they come and break down the door, it is of their own finding."

"If they came," was his response, "I wonder how you would fight."

"I wonder also," said she simply. "I have brought no weapon."

He began to understand her mood.

"Half wild you are," he said. "I shall not disgrace you by calling you anything else. Feel myself and my civilization above you? Heaven forbid! I accuse you of pleading nothing, of calling up no promises nor caring to. I know you are as unfettered as though there were no body encasing your impetuous soul."

"And for being here," she asked, her face burning, and her hand on his arm, "I am a traitor, is it not so?"

He said nothing for a moment, a moment in which, not knowing it, he held her soul, as it were, in his hand.

"You are not a traitor," he said slowly. "You are a free spirit."

He had no more than said it when he blamed himself for the words. Many a time, months, years after that night, the blame returned, and remorse lived with him. It would not be possible to say with com-

plete fulness just why he answered her thus. It was not haste; he had time to think. Doubtless it was the desperation of his circumstances. That he was hiding within a few hundred yards of many enemies; that they were searching for him to kill him; that she was, or had been, one of them, and could give him over to his fate at any moment; these were not the half of the thoughts that flashed over him. The rest were: Kings shall not, cannot succeed in America. This was a ground principle of his most sacred belief. Fate had cast him to crush this dreamer who would be king. The part might seem small enough in a nation's history — but it might, too, be infinitely great. Seldom had a revolution a better set of circumstances. The situation seemed to him almost desperate. In all this, what was the duty of him, the leader of the opposition and a republican to the core of his being? Let no hasty judgment condemn him if he decided that any sacrifice should be made. So he told her that she was no traitor, and called her a free spirit. And considering her nature, her ancestry, the philosophy that civilization advances and that barbarism cannot know — who can say he lied? She was at least true to her poor, torn heart. The die once cast with him, he must play the game out.

"I have believed in you," he said, "as I have believed in few women. I am sorry you are my enemy. With an ally such as you anything might be possible."

"Anything," said she, with a pathos as natural as was the beating of her heart, "but a return to the old days. That is not possible."

He stood taller and looked at her. There had been, there may now have been, deep emotion in him raised by this girl. He had been fascinated, moved

to his heart's bottom, wrapped in her life as a lake is wrapped in the light of the summer sun. The passion had been sudden, hot. He had held it with a grip of iron, but it had showed itself. He had felt it unreal, not lasting. Even in the height of it he had doubted her. In the strain of his situation and its desperation, looking at her now when she said that, the old fire came somehow into his face. He was handsome then and every feature was lit with the fire. He made no reply in words; he only (consciously or unconsciously, let a higher truth be his judge) let his eyes speak — and she was broken.

She stepped to him quickly, the blood leaping to her face, took his hand with a sudden convulsive sob, and cried:

“Trust me — trust me when the time comes!”

She was immediately pale to her very lips, turned and ran out, and was gone; out of the *patio* door — on through the black garden — on to the dim lit street — away — away. When she turned, the meaning of her words came on him, and the remorse. What had his face encouraged her to do? What great sin was he, in that one silent moment, guilty of? He ran after her. He called her name. He must reach her. He must call her back. He must tell her it cannot, shall not be, that if he cannot win it alone without this sin from her, then let him rather die, there, now, with defeat branded on him. Pepa! Pepa! Perhaps she heard him and feared to lose that silent promise. She was gone in the garden's blackness. He went stumbling on after her, seeing nothing. The rain was beating down in torrents and the thunders were rolling their battles of the sky. He came toward the street door and a flash of lightning lit all the rain-drenched walls and stables and the dripping

plants at his feet. It showed him, too, the door in the high adobe wall closed after her. He ran and opened it and the street was empty. He turned back, in the blackness of the drenched night. And at some time before midnight, aided by the storm and by the fact that Vicente's little force was too small and unorganized effectually to guard every avenue of the town, he made his escape on the *presidente's* horse, galloping through mud and water, wet to the skin, away to the mountains and the stony Guadalajara road, his steed struggling and slipping, his blood burning hot. Thus on this night did Pepa Aranja fall, and did Don Rodrigo commit a sin.

CHAPTER V

WHEN the first glimpse of dawn came in the east, the wet soldiers were up and drying. A light breeze blew from the rising sun, the lake glistened and danced, and there were naked backs and naked legs, white clothing spread in the sun to dry, laughter and song. There was cooking, too, by men and women; and, before seven o'clock, there was an hilarious feast. Death lost its terrors. Shadows went away with the night. Fighting was the sport of men, the red blood of existence. And with victory and a crushed antagonist behind, hope and little resistance before, high was the spirit of the army.

Of the eight hundred of the fight, more than seven hundred were ready for the march. To these, during the night, had come recruits. The first victory inspired many in the town with the desire to be part of the next. The news spread to the surrounding country, and at daybreak came still others — sowers, charcoal burners, ox-cart drivers, fishers — all dissatisfied with a plodding, barren existence, ready for a change and the wine of excitement. At breakfast there were more than eight hundred. The new recruits were given largely to Fortino, whose ranks had suffered most heavily. When Doroteo brought him Vicente's order to that effect the great burly fisherman was much moved.

"I swear I am not worth it," growled he. "I am more fit to carry the corn."

"I take it," said Anastasio, "that you will carry enough as it is. I have sat here dazed at the amount of it, my appetite gone like a shirt in a high wind. If I can figure, you have stowed inside of your carrion corn to the amount of three *almudas*."

"Sixty cents worth!" cried Francisco, putting his naked legs into white trousers not absolutely dry. "Nigh five *reales* has this traitor eaten up in pure silver and in the days of famine!"

Fortino replied nothing. Still depressed, still honestly self-accusing, he turned blackly to his horse.

A vital change in the condition of the troops was being effected as rapidly as energy and money could accomplish it. All those who joined were urged to come mounted if horses could possibly be obtained. Runners were that morning sent out in the direction the army was to take to call the people to arms, and, above all else, to secure horses. Some good animals were obtained in Ocotlan, two of which were turned over to Francisco and Anastasio. The cavalry numbered fifty-three when the army left that place.

Before the start Vicente rode among the men, crying out words of encouragement and greeting. They were beginning to feel that respect and sympathy which victory and a silent mien will many a time inspire in an army for its leader — which continued success deepens into love. They cheered him, standing up and waving sombreros. He took off his own to them and rode on. Then, riding slowly out of the town, her steed seemingly proud of its burden, her red dress dry again, and her beauty

fresh as the morning air she rode in, came Pepa. They had been watching for her. The cheer began and rose and spread, till it became deafening. She rode slowly along all the line, bowing and smiling at them. The enthusiasm doubled and was wild. She was now, irrevocably, the genius of the army. Emotion, playing free here in these troops, had enthroned her as the spirit of victory. She carried her part proudly, and the cheer continued when she had passed.

Thus, they being flushed with triumph, the march to the east in the early morning began. The marshes near the shining lake, the reeds, the corn-fields and the meadows about Ocotlan, were passed. Bright they were in the light of an autumn day; and even the lessening adobe walls shone golden in the sun. The townspeople, still stupefied at these strange and quick running events, came to the town's edge and watched the column go. The *presidente* came too, early as it was. And behind him came Enriqueta. Enriqueta stopped at the end of the last street, held her hand to shade her eyes, and stared eagerly out across the fields to the departing troops.

"Oh! they have not got him, my husband," murmured she. "They have not caught that beautiful young man!"

And she turned back to her barred-in daughters — who knows with what sighs in her virtuous Castilian bosom over the quick riddance of that menace to her household?

Thenceforward, for six shining days, only triumph met the advancing troops. News of the victory, of the coming successes, changes, golden times, spread speedily in all directions. The army arrived at no

point to which the fame of its march had not come before it. All along the way the poverty-stricken people of the country, the ragged children and the sullen men, crowded to see. They looked with awe on that strange woman who rode before, and with wonder and admiration on the man who should come to be a king. On the whole, they were not displeased with the idea. Many villages received the victorious band with open arms, such opposition as they contained fleeing as the band came. Even some of the officials and police, disgusted with a government that had bandied them about like straws, paid them when it could and let them starve when it could not, joined the new cause.

Round all the lake's eastern end there was no power of resistance sufficient to organize itself and strike a blow. The little army grew at every step it took. Ragged, gaunt prospectors and hungry sowers of corn threw away tools and came down out of mountains to be a part of this unhampered progress. The loose population of many towns joined in and swelled the cheers for Vicente and la capitana. Wherever the army halted there was plenty for it to eat, arranged for secretly between clergy and messengers sent before. And in every town the priest was Vicente's friend and helper. It was the priest who made him familiar with every resource of the place; who did more than any other ten men to the success of the expedition; who persuaded the holders of corn, reluctant to sell on credit when the cash was wanting, that the speculation was safe. Thus was the good-will of the people always maintained. Pillaging was instantly punished. Order was improved and made a necessity. The undercurrent of power which came always from

the church did not make itself outwardly noticeable. But it was a never-failing force such as Vicente alone could rightly measure, bearing him and his hopes on to the end. He knew, too, who it was that most nearly personified that force. Many a time he burned to break his long silence regarding his unknown hermit benefactor. But he held his peace.

From eight hundred his forces grew to a thousand, to twelve hundred, to fifteen hundred, to two thousand. The vigilance in search of horses was not abated. In those days, as now, the country was dotted with mammoth *haciendas* or ranches. Some of them are many leagues square, containing hundreds of all sorts of domestic animals and raising enormous crops of every grain and fruit known to the semi-tropical climate. Near the easternmost point of the lake lay one of these. It was called the Hacienda of the Good Faith. Its owner, a Spaniard, long since disgusted at the throwing off of the Spanish yoke, hating the half-governments that had staggered successively and broken under the burden since the end of Spanish reign, took it into his heart to belie his place's name and play bad faith with existing circumstances. Spain being an impossibility, he hailed a king, any king, with delight. He received word, before the arrival of Vicente, of the need of horses. He burst into glee, swore he would lose his soul for such a cause, and, forgetting how his ancestors had trampled with an equal enthusiasm the very government from which Vicente was descended, scoured the adjacent country, drained it and his own lands of what horseflesh there was to be found, and, on the coming of Vicente, clapped him on the back with an oath, put

himself on familiar terms with the leader most odiously, and turned over scarcely less than seven hundred horses to the little army.

The gift was not to be despised. It was a god-send. The cavalry had already been increased to nearly three hundred; they numbered now a thousand. Few, indeed, were the recruits from this half wild people who could not ride, and ride well. If there were no saddle, then they could ride without saddle. The high spirits of the men, having increased steadily since Ocotlan, burst out. The Spaniard was carried on shoulders, dropped, left on his *hacienda*, and, possibly, forgotten. And the army went on.

It rounded the irregular points and bays that make the lake's eastern end, and gradually turning westward again proceeded straight along the southern coast. When they should have traversed more than half that coast they should arrive at the town of Tizapan, Doroteo's native place. Doroteo had promised the army a royal reception there.

Pepa, during this triumphal passage, was the same unreadable Pepa. There were times when she was gay and her laugh rang out like a bird's note. She would be the embodiment of a wild joy for hours. She would gallop along the lake's edge, singing as she went. She would thread her way among the towering rocks that narrowed the path, in untamed mood. But her good spirits seemed not altogether natural. During these days the eyes that watched her most constantly, like the eyes of a cat, were Doroteo's.

"There is mental fever in that happiness," said Doroteo to himself.

The majority of the time, however, she was

gloomy. This, too, was unnatural to her. She rode at times all the day slowly in advance of the troops, wrapped in melancholy. She would speak to no one. She did not laugh or sing. She would not even turn to look at them. If any rode up and saw her face, it was clouded, and she grew angry and ordered them not to speak to her. She arose on certain mornings from such beds as Vicente had been able to secure for her or as she had secured for herself, with the strained look of the eyes that marks one who has not slept. Then on those days the presence of others irritated her. A change had come over Pepa. Those near her saw it, wondered at it. She was inscrutable. Most of all she was restless. Nothing, nothing satisfied her now.

The column was one day advancing round an arm of the lake at its southeastern shore. The mountains here descended almost to the water, their peaks towering, rocky, overhead. The path at their feet was narrow. The girl was in front, Vicente following her closely. Doroteo and Fortino, leading the cavalry, were behind them, and the horse and foot wound a tortuous way at the lake's edge. Pepa had been silent all the day. Vicente spurred to her side. There was barely room for the two horses, his being next the water.

"Your love for me," he said gently, "is deep and true; is it not so?"

She turned her head and looked at him. This riding in sun and wind, and this continued hardship of an army's life, seemed only to have increased her beauty. It was her true sphere.

"You have never doubted it?" she said, speaking unusually low.

"No. Yet true love turns first to the one it loves,

brings every burden, tells every thought and feeling. Then why are you changed, Pepa? What is it that has come over you? I have watched it hour after hour. You are not the same. We are bound together in so deep a destiny, and every step we are taking now means so much, that there should be knowledge, harmony between us. From a dream it takes on some little of the form of reality, though it be only begun. And I can let my mind go on and find you a queen. Then it is vital to me that something is changing you. What is it?"

She went on in silence, pale. After a time she looked up at him again.

"I think," she said, "it is because I have of late finished the changing from being a girl."

"Then thank the waters and the mountains," said he, with some relief, "for they made you as you are — a daughter of them."

They had come to the end of the narrow passage and the road was wider. She suddenly gave him that old dazzling smile and galloped away far ahead of him, spurring ever more swiftly; and she sang:

"Slender and strange that vessel was, and bright,
Bright with the sacred serpent's glittering scale.
A thousand skins their million points of light
Flashed from its sides all crystal clear and frail,
That its unearthly ray,
Lighting the fog-drowned day,
Left o'er the leaden sea a shining trail."

He followed her with eyes in which there was coming a sadness. Much as he hated doubt, scorned suspicion, loved faith, Clarita's words would come to him. Clarita had been afraid of her.

Quiroz too was watching her. It chanced after a

time that, having gradually advanced some distance in the army's lead, he overtook her.

"There is fever in the gazelle's eyes," said he, coming close. "She rides madly. She spurs and halts and spurs again. Ah, it is weighing on her, a burden in the breast. Pepa, a hundred thousand moods, each more beautiful than the last, I swear to God have I counted in you in the last four days!"

She did not repel him as she often had done. She smiled at him, too, the dazzling smile.

"Heartburns!" she cried mockingly, and laughed a light laugh.

He wheeled his horse against hers.

"Yours are not the first or the last," said he, his eyes gleaming on her, "or the only heartburns. You can move heaven and earth. I have told you so a dozen times before. It is not the right nor the dreams — it is blood like yours that does, and daring like — well, I have been said to dare. Remember; there are other heartburns than yours."

High rocks at a turn in the road here hiding them, he was dazzled then by the expression of her face and her unusual action. She put out a quick, hot hand and placed it half roguishly on his as it lay on the saddle's horn. Whether it was his fancy or not, he believed she pressed his fingers with hers; and she dashed away feverishly, throwing a flash of the eyes over her shoulder. She left his blood leaping like fire in his veins.

At noon of the fifth day they arrived thus, having increased still more, at a town called Jiquilpan. There was a little body of recruits promised from the mountains here. There was a messenger to arrive from the monastery. There were more horses

to be secured and a more thorough organization of the forces to be accomplished. For Vicente believed that before many days his enemy would have returned. He decided to remain in Jiquilpan, drilling his troops, the rest of that day and all of the next, making straight for Tizapan on the day after the morrow. Tizapan, he had told Doroteo, seemed always to hang in his mind as an objective point, a place of meaning.

"Why?" asked Doroteo.

"I do not know. That place, its very name, has weighed on me from the first. Who knows? Rodrigo may meet us there. I want to enter it in better condition."

"He will have to ride like the son of the devil if he does," said Doroteo.

CHAPTER VI

TO travel by night those rockbound ways over the mountain ridge that separates the lake from the leveler regions about Guadalajara, is to make a lonely journey, let the night be beautiful as it may. By starlight the way is uncertain and full of gloom; the peaks are vast shadows against the sky, the ravines are hollows of unknown depths and mystery. If there be a moon, the scene is an enchanted one. Crags rise misty white at every turn; shrubbery stands a formless mass melted into gray continuity; from the summit of a ridge distance unmeasured stretches out before one, limitless, moonlit, drowned at last in the white silence leagues upon leagues away. But if there be one of those swift night storms hurling himself across the mountains, the way is, in spite of that diabolic company, more solitary still. The peaks are sheds to pour the water in torrents down upon the path. The thunders roar and crash, fighting the crags and bursting in fury over the answering ravine. The evil spirit of the lightning rips the blackness with a sudden blinding glare of its unholy passion.

Beating his lonely way through a night like this rode a horseman. He had his teeth ground together, his sombrero low over his face, his hair, unkempt and wild, wet with rain. His horse, apparently accustomed to such journeys, cared not at all for the lightning or the thunders. It went steadily, desperately on, cutting its way into the thick of the storm, stum-

bling now and then, but making sure progress. And to the rider the storm mattered little. Was the way solitary? He and his soul were more solitary still. Was the blackness like that which succeeds a burnt-out passion of the heart, the death of hope? He had carried that blackness in him, was carrying it still, had walked with it through the course of years. Was there no cessation of the lightning's blinding tyranny, devilish glee, over his unanswering spirit? Likewise had his heart grown callous to tyranny.

The hours of riding thus had little measurement, little meaning to him. It may have been midnight, or earlier or later, when, having passed the ruggedest portion of the way and issued out of those mountain jaws, he turned at length into the more open road that leads over plain and through valleys to the distant city. Hardly had he done so when he heard upon that road footsteps out of the deep night behind him. He did not turn, only instinctively shrank into himself and went on. The sound at length was nearer, the approach of a horse that followed. The lightning flashed out and he heard the animal behind him suddenly shy, it having caught sight of the rider before. Then the darkness was there again and the rider before and the rider behind kept on in their uncongenial course.

He before, from long habit unmoving, expressionless, and from long necessity cowed with a kind of buried desperation before men, involuntarily urged his horse on the faster. He lost at length the sound behind him. Then another flash lit all the wide, irregular valley and the peaks cut clear against the glare. And the horse behind came nearer, trotting a quick trot. The first rider, suddenly thrilled with a sensation like unreasoning fear, spurred on and

trotted likewise. There was a half-hour of this, the one unchangeably following the other, the first shrinking like a criminal as he rode.

The last rider, fugitive as he was, did not shrink, nor was there in him any of the feeling of the cowed or the hunted. He had been startled to see the other suddenly before him, where previously there had been no one. The lightning had shown him the rugged path opening into his smoother one out of the mountains, along which the other must have come. That other path, he knew, could lead only to Chapala or to some portion of the more easterly shore. Something in the mysterious apparition's manner suggested stealth to the follower and his coming thus in the night's middle from that region roused all the follower's alertness. This might be some messenger of his enemies. Hence he spurred up as an experiment. The other, seeming, by the intermittent glares, to crouch upon his horse, spurred up also. So the trot before and the following trot were continued, the first with some unknown habitual dread, the last with relentless purpose. The storm was passing and the rain was lighter. The flashes, too, were less frequent. The road being now more secure, he in front dug spurs into his steed and galloped. The muscles of his face were drawn like cords, and his ears strained to catch the sound behind. The dreaded change was not wanting; the horse behind broke also into a gallop. The dread of the first rider changed into a burdening fear. He was no longer capable of sharp terror. Into his strange mind came the query, why should he fear? — what was there in all the earth to cause dread to him? No matter. Dread had grown to be a part of his daily life. It was the first habit of his mind. So, needlessly, as a matter of course,

he fled, and the relentless beat of hoofs followed him. He ground his teeth still more, leaned over his horse's neck, and spurred on faster. His pursuer spurred to equal speed. An hour of this and the horses were panting. Fancying the other's pursuing pace slackened, the first rider drew sullenly in and his horse trotted slowly. The clouds were passing and there was the faint light of a more ordinary night. The second rider drew in also, and the slow trot of the one kept pace with that of the other.

The first animal regained his wind and its rider, listening always to that remorseless beat, beat of the hoofs behind, regained his causeless dread. There was no inconsiderable portion of the journey still before him. To listen to that following tread thus calmly all the way! He spurred on again into a gallop and the other followed. The gallop grew faster and faster. Out from the flying clouds suddenly broke the morning star in the east, brilliant as it is in these semi-tropical altitudes only, a mammoth jewel, a crystalline moon. The speed of the first rider had increased still more. It was now a mad course. And he who followed kept the distance between always the same. Nearing the city after an hour of this strange race, the course was like a flight of panic. It was on a run, as though life itself were the stake, that the outlying huts were passed.

When the city's streets were reached, the first, as though struck with reason or shame, drew up to a more moderate pace. The other did likewise. The gray of dawn was beginning to appear in the east. The first rider made a circuit round the outskirts. Under other circumstances the follower would not have pursued that course. He would have made straight for the town's centre. But he pursued it

now. The first light of day was coming faintly into the narrow streets when the two arrived thus at the great walls of the monastery. At their beginning the first rider spurred up yet a little more. He flung himself to the ground and beat loudly on the massive knocker at the gates, the other seeing faintly his tangled hair. While the door was being opened he who had dismounted, hearing the following horse close at hand, could not resist the temptation to throw a hasty glance over his shoulder—it was the fascination induced by his dread. Then he went in and the door was closed, went in carrying his gloom and his solitude with him—to be still under the weight that made him more like a fleeing beast than a man.

In the moment of that backward glance, the following rider had perceived, by the faint coming daylight, the face of him he followed. He rode on, wondering at its monstrous hideousness.

“At least,” said he at last, shaking himself free of his thoughts, “that little chase has brought me here an hour or so in advance of my calculations. A good honest storm this was, and I am much misled if the most covered part of my shivering skin is not the wettest.”

An hour later the sun came up, the city began to stir, and all the streets, sprinkled by hand and swept in small sections by bunches of broom-straw, awoke yellow and clean into another day. The rider, having found accommodations for his horse and himself, dry clothing and a breakfast, strode away at seven o'clock to the main plaza. He had made himself sure of the arrival of his escaped companions. He knew the empty barracks they would be likely to occupy. He had found them there, every man sound asleep,

exhausted. They had arrived three hours before him.

In the plaza was a freshness not even rivalled in the mountains, a glistening of glossy leaves, a swaying of fruit, the beauties of masses of flowers. The two pointed towers of the great cathedral pierced a sky than which Ægean's own could not be bluer, and wherein were no traces of the storm that was. The bells of the clock on the long white government palace were multifariously proclaiming the hour when the visitor entered the wide doors beneath them. He knew the governor had a habit—rather an astonishing habit in this land of the late beginning of business—of coming to his office and laboring alone very early in the morning. A peon sweeping the stone hall let him in and knocked for him at the governor's door. The governor opened it.

“Don Rodrigo!” he cried with a thrill of anxiety, and led the visitor in and closed the door—a weary, stiff visitor, needing rest and sleep, but determined and alert still.

At the period at which this history has arrived, the accomplishment of desirable political facts, whatever their nature, was impeded by hindrances to which it is difficult to do full justice, the labyrinths of which it is not always possible to comprehend. That evil genius that presided over the series of fatalities attacking the many Mexican governments, nothing appeared to satisfy. It did not suffice that the Republic had passed through, was passing through, gave every evidence of a continuation in passing through, every kind of political disease, exhausting throe, fatal paroxysm. These have been hinted at before. In the midst of these must come menaces, attacks, defeats, from without, to supplement ambition, un-

dermining, and treason within. A huge and overshadowing country to the north, inspired by unworthy motives, answering the pressure brought upon her by a party desirous of increasing the party power and the territory wherein that power should be dominant, had declared war on its puny neighbor. The slave principles, being then dominant, launched the army. A slave-holder led it. After fifty years it is not easy to find a historian who does not condemn that war — for the slave power is dead. In the late spring of the year of this narrative, namely, eighteen hundred and forty-six, General Taylor crossed the Rio Grande and invaded Mexican territory. In September, shortly before the events described in the preceding chapters of this book, the city of Monterey, garrisoned by an army of nine thousand Mexicans, was besieged by the American general with an army of seven thousand. For several days the place held out, giving to Worth his opportunity for that gallant capture of the Episcopal palace on the hill. The nine thousand gave up to the seven thousand. General Ampudia retreated to San Luis Potosi. The Americans were coming on to the capital. Furthermore they were sending another and a greater force to Vera Cruz. It was vital that Taylor be crushed at once before Scott should sweep up from the Gulf. This was the news which had arrived at Guadalajara not long before Rodrigo's return. And in that city, as in every other city of the Republic to which the news had come, there was agitation.

With these tidings came summons from Santa Anna. He was to leave his government at Mexico in the hands of Farias, his vice-president. He was to march at once in person, at the head of the Mexican army, against Taylor. He needed and would

have, imperial old despot as he was, every soldier that could possibly reach him on his march. Guadalajara, the largest city save his own, should do her utmost. She had been drained — drain her again. She was threatened with disaster at home — the disaster from abroad was more threatening. Santa Anna set out from his capital boldly, little knowing it was only for a worse than useless march, to culminate in the bloody defeat of Angostura — leaving behind him dissent, insurrection, the “Polko” attack on his unsupported government, having before him the coming disastrous winter, Scott, Churubusco, humiliating amputation of that great north limb of his country.

So when Don Rodrigo put in his strong plea for men and showed that growing danger on the lake, there were other calls for the soldiers he so much needed. Were there any soldiers? The governor, foreseeing this need long, and pressed at last to superhuman effort by the news of the Monterey disaster, was raising a force. How large? He shook his head: a pitiable two hundred. Cavalry? Ay, cavalry — not all raised yet, promised partly from other towns, to be sent off as soon as possible to join Santa Anna. The good, but not altogether statesmanlike, executive was in his usual torn state of mind. He found himself now between two dire necessities. Rodrigo declared his was the better cause, brought in all his verbal artillery, grew warm and desperate, swore the men by every right that danger created should be his. The exasperated governor, forgetting for once his friendship for the other, lost his temper. He cursed Rodrigo, Santa Anna, the United States, life, and Heaven. Rodrigo considered this excusable, but declared again for the men. It were better, said he, to strike an enemy at the door than to run away to a

distant one. The governor accused him of partiality to the northern invaders.

"Your blood will be boiling up in their support," said he. "This whirlwind will carry you, too, Rodrigo, my friend in distress, away to fight against your adopted country."

"Impossible — absurd!" broke in Rodrigo. "The United States can take care of itself; at all events, it needs not me. That war, thank my luck and some purple dashes in the landscape of the past, is none of mine. I would not be a part of it so long as there are corners of this untamed land to bury myself in. I am occupied with a little war of my own, and I tell you plainly it is not so little as it seems. If you value your State and your safety, in the name of reason give me whatever weapon you have, to strike again, and give it to me now. Your two hundred men cannot vitally influence the fate of Santa Anna; has n't he enough of your fighting blood already? They may do vital work here. I honestly believe two hundred good fighters can crush this uprising now."

"Why, you young hothead," said the governor, "you are advising the executive of a State to disobey the order of his superior; to refuse to respond to the call of his country!"

"Very good," said Rodrigo, innocently unconscious of his inferior position; "that is the way patriotic speeches put matters. I put it thus: I am advising you to send what force you have to crush a danger, a real, live, immediate danger at your door, and to think, then, of the more distant one whose progress your little band of cavalry can neither aid nor retard. Besides, you know enough of this country to understand that in any wind you totter — and the government that seats you. Defeat or victory for Taylor,

Santa Anna's government will go down with the next revolution, and you with it. Santa Anna will not come to upbraid you with laxity; he will be engaged in catching the ruins of his power as they fall. Politically, you die shortly; so does every other officer in this swift-moving kaleidoscope of governments. At least while you live do the good deed of defending first your own State."

Thus did the argument continue; and, much to the chagrin and nigh unbearable nervousness of Rodrigo, it continued not merely through that day, but through several days. Meanwhile, the governor neared prostration, Santa Anna was marching to defeat, and Vicente's victorious progress was going on. Several causes contributed to this exasperating delay. The little troop of two hundred, small as it was, was not yet gathered; though, in the eternal Mexican spirit of delay, it was promised. There is an unalterable, to a pessimistic philosopher a fatal, inertia in this nation. To do a thing promptly seems out of the province of its activities. Furthermore, the governor's very doubt made matters slower, for a man sure of his purpose goes more quickly at it than one in doubt.

Bonavidas on the second day, renewed in strength and appearing refreshingly emaciated (for that appearance did truly seem a necessary accompaniment and indication of good health in him, he, when exhausted, assuming a puffiness about the large eyes and in the grayish cheeks that might have been taken as indicative of a bettered condition) — Bonavidas, praised and recommended by Rodrigo, added his persuasions to the *jefe's*. He also went hard to work, as did some of his companions, hastening the gathering of the force. He even rode to towns at a short

distance. On the evening of the third day he astonished the governor by bringing in a detachment of ten unexpected and unpromised recruits. He had raised them up from the dead, said Bonavidas with an uncanny grin.

According to a calculation afterward proved erroneous, it seemed fast nearing the time when all aid would be useless to Santa Anna. This Rodrigo saw. His exertions at persuasion suddenly ceased. The governor had fallen of late into a species of political trance. Word was one day passed to Rodrigo's men to lie quiet till the next. This was done. The governor, at length positively ill, did nothing that night. The following morning Rodrigo brought him a map of what he believed to be Santa Anna's route, — a map of the route a force from Guadalajara must take to join him, with the days marked.

"It is impossible," said Rodrigo, with a pleasant sparkle of the eye. "They can't reach him now if the Americans blow him some leagues nearer."

The governor ran all his fingers madly through his hair, — and Rodrigo's cause was won. Owing to the accumulation of delay after delay, the force was not ready to start till the morning of the sixth day. That day dawned bright and dry. Rodrigo and his little band of escaped warriors had come to be like brothers. The twelve others were as eager to be at the fight as was Rodrigo himself. They regarded the war as personal property, — a fine little private trouble of their own wherein glory and victory awaited them on the margins of the lake — and revenge, too, fascinating goddess as she was. Two hundred and twenty-nine horsemen, including Rodrigo, Bonavidas, and some lieutenants, started away in spirits tuned high to the harmony that there may be even in war.

CHAPTER VII

THE *jefe's* men did not direct their course at once to Chapala. After crossing the divide they made a slight angle to the west. Rodrigo was ignorant as to the present whereabouts of Vicente. He conversed with Bonavidas and others on the journey, hearing their opinions. He himself believed the revolutionist must have arrived by this time at some spot on the lake's opposite shore. He did not believe it would be so far west as Tizapan.

"With a good gait," he said, speaking to a soldier familiar with the lake, "how much time do we need to overtake him at a point some twenty or thirty miles east of Tizapan?"

"If we wanted to be in condition to fight after it," was the reply, "I should say we could do it in three days. And that would mean heavy riding."

Rodrigo shut his jaws and rode on meditating. It was then that he wheeled off to a path that leads to the lake a little west of Chapala.

"Are you going to circle it in the opposite direction?" asked Bonavidas. "Not bad! The distance, I should say, is the same either way. We will meet him."

"Bonavidas," said the *jefe*, "I am making straight for Ajicjic. That is six miles west of Chapala. On this road I can reach it almost as soon as I could reach Chapala, perhaps a half hour later. It is already past noon. We shall reach the lake by

three o'clock. In Ajicjic I can learn something of Vicente — as well there as another place. The news of his army will have spread. Well, there are two ways of reaching the opposite side of a lake. You can go round it or you can — ”

“Cross it!” broke in Bonavidas with an amazement that had a chuckle in it. “But, save your soul, man, cross it with two hundred animals! In the name of the saints, did you ever hear of an attempt like that on Chapala? — *canoas* — low roofs — miserable vessels. Why, they would n't hold six horses apiece. Dead, that is where the Republic's honorable army would be, in the lake's oozy bottom.”

Bonavidas smiled at his conceit, and his gaunt face expressed no such objections as did his words.

“I can put more than six in some of those vessels,” said Rodrigo, determined, “if I have to pile them one on the other. Suppose he had come as far as Tuxcueco. We could cross, at the slowest, in ten hours. This is better than three days.”

Bonavidas whistled long and low, and went on in dazed mood. Then he suddenly clapped his leg with his hand and broke out:

“We will!” cried he. “This is Sunday!”

“Which I have remembered,” said Rodrigo, “and on Sunday Chapala's beach is crowded with *canoas* for market day. I am going first to Ajicjic that, if the news be right, I may begin at that point gathering up ships, thence gather them all the way back to Chapala. Hence, a sail on the foam. Poetical outlook!”

An eager delight lit the unhealthiness of Bonavidas' countenance. They were riding over a rough trail with cacti and stones about, and here and

there a flock of goats. To the right was a seemingly endless chain of mountains, to the left, more distant, rose St. Michael, low and round (behind whose bulk lay Chapala and the water), and the larger head, called Angostura, lying between that town and Ajicjic on the lake's edge. Between Angostura and the opposite mountain chain the road led, rising to a hill, to whose summit the little army came. They looked down on the lake and, nearer, small irregular fields, scores of them, checkering a level stretch from mountains to water. Out of these, Ajicjic's church thrust up a single gleaming tower of white. Three o'clock found the troop sweeping into the barren plaza of that fishing village.

To this day Ajicjic can claim no more than some two thousand souls. It has, even yet, no railroad, no stage; rarely has a vehicle been seen in that primitive place other than the awkward ox-cart. Its low, unplastered adobe walls stand close together. The streets are alleys of extreme narrowness wherein there is mud when it rains, dust when it is dry, rocks and swine forever. Nigh every alley twists and turns, is for a block no more than a gutter, for another block a public stable for burros. Yet one may find some better quarters. The plaza, though it is only a bare, brown waste, is wide. The open court before the church, though it too is bare and dirty, with lonely, crumbling walls and pillars about it, yet has in its centre a weather-beaten cross that speaks of service to the Lord.

The troop filled the plaza. It was halted, and the inhabitants of the town, struck with amazement, either shut themselves up or gathered in silence round about. Groups of brown children, absolutely

naked, sat down in the dirt, thumbs in mouth, to wonder in comfort. Rodrigo and Bonavidas began the inquiries, prefacing them with jocularly expressed friendship to certain storekeepers and a toss of *tequila* here and there down a willing throat. Boats? There hadn't come but one boat to Ajicjic the blessed day. Ajicjic was losing importance in these times. On market days everybody went to the bigger market at Chapala, where the news was dispersed. And this one boat? It had come from Tizapan with a load of wood for the lime burners. Its captain, an ancient and withered Indian, was sought out and refreshed with drink. *Si*, he knew of Vicente. It was said the day before in Tizapan that Vicente and his army had arrived at Jiquilpan and were coming. This was made very clear. How big was the army? Oh Lord! it was large. But *how* large? The bewildered old barbarian had no idea of numbers. "Very many," said he, satisfied with his information. But how many? "Oh, a hundred thousand!" cried he, much put to it; "and I don't care what be the government so it lets me alone — Mother of the Lord! let it leave me alone; this is all I want of the government!"

The government did not leave him alone. His *canoe* was taken. Rodrigo treated him kindly and promised him no harm should come to his vessel; it should be turned over to him on the morrow. The old owner wailed over this; he would go wherever his ship went. Rodrigo agreed. He could cross with them, but the vessel should be taken and at once. So two of his soldiers were detailed to help pole it to Chapala; for as yet there was no wind.

The rest rode out of the town and made away toward the latter place, scanning the shore. The

lake was as still as the rocks. Its glassy surface threw up the beams of the lowering sun like a mammoth mirror. Every mountain peak hung his shadow, clear and blue as himself, in its depths; and below those hanging summits lay a mock sky as fathomless as its counterpart above.

"This is damnation for a wind," said Bonavidas.

"Out of that stillness a wind will come at dusk from the west," replied Rodrigo, "or, at most, a little later. Till we are ready it cannot remain too still."

The road led round a wide bay. A far point, extending yonder into the water, marked a division from which both Chapala and Ajicjic could be plainly seen. There are a few huts on this point, and the place is called San Antonio. There are brick-kilns there, and this was the first spot since leaving Ajicjic where *canoas* were found. There were five of them lying on the many-tinted waters, their masts wrapped tightly with the sails. They had come to be loaded with brick. But Sunday is not a day to work — nay, it is a day to loll in the nearest market town, particularly if there be news. Here in this peaceful, primitive, fishing region, people feared not thieves. The vessels were deserted; the brick-kilns smoked, attended by one boy only. Soldiers were detailed for these *canoas*, and the five were brought on (pushed with long poles always provided for these craft), along the edge of that next broad curve across whose shining surface, three miles away, Chapala's walls crouched under St. Michael.

Somewhat disappointed at having found, thus far, but six vessels, Rodrigo proceeded with all speed to Chapala. The loading — hazardous, quixotic, un-

heard-of plan as it was — must be done before the wind came. The stillness so common to the afternoon during the dry season usually became roughness at nightfall. His men, apprised of the bold intention of their leader, liked the novelty of it. This is the spirit, said they, that wins. They cheered the news. The very difficulties and dangers of the project recommended it to Rodrigo. To gain two days and a half by that quick, unexpected stroke, was to him to do a deed the idea of which filled him with delight. He pictured to himself the queer fleet lumbering into Tizapan ahead of his enemies. He vowed in his heart he would beat Vicente at Tizapan or go down in the attempt. He knew one or two animals had sometimes been brought across the lake in these vessels. If one could be brought, why, let the thing expand — go to, let us do an oddity. Originality gains much. We will sail with two hundred and twenty-nine! He laughed within himself exultantly.

“I am a boy again,” said he, “sailing wooden butter-dishes on the pond!”

Now, at the century's end, navigation by modern means is just beginning to appear on Chapalac. There is one old steamer full of vermin and rickety, exceedingly small. She fell over once in the water and drowned many passengers. There is a new steamer talked of. The Hon. S—— C——, Her British Majesty's ex-consul general to Sweden, has a little yacht that skims these waters. Otherwise the shipping is the same that has conducted the primitive lake commerce for hundreds of years. At the time of Rodrigo's daring deed (talked of yet in all that section of the State) the only vessels were the *canoas*. One can see them there to-day exactly

as they were in the old times. The largest may be sixty feet in length by fifteen broad. They are flat bottomed, seldom measuring six feet from water to thatch. They are pitched black without. Over nearly one half of the vessel there is a pointed thatched roof. Some of them to-day have roofs of boards; there were none of that sort then. From the floor's middle stands the single mast with a pulley in its top. One long yard is hoisted to the mast's summit by rope and the pulley. To the yard is attached the single square sail. This canvas is often phenomenally large. It extends, when spread, far out beyond the sides of the boat, a mammoth expanse of glittering white, lacking the beauty of the more graceful sails of a yacht, employing the one plain principle of more surface, more progress, but sometimes adorned with the vessel's fantastic name painted in black across all the shining extent.

The speed of these craft is of course not high. Never, since the lake came into being, has there been cause for haste here. The wind must be pretty well behind; there is little of the science of tacking; there is never such a thing dreamed of as sailing against the wind. The rudder is a large wooden one, operated by a horizontal handle extending over the boat's stern. Three sailors are ample allowance. Two can manage a vessel if the weather is fair and there is no third. There are known some heroic cases in which one person has sailed a *canoa* alone. When Cortes built his vessels in Tlaxcala, carried them across the mountains, and launched them, to the Aztecs' consternation, on the lake where the Aztec capital stood, he did what is agreed to have been an astounding thing. It is only an instance of the fickleness of history that

Rodrigo's less astonishing but similarly original deed should be in no record. It lives only in the minds of the lake people, who alone know the capacity of their boats and the difficulty of managing a fleet of them.

Chapala was in her gayest colors on this day. Her market place, even at four of the afternoon, was crowded. There had gone a thrill along all the lake's borders at the news of the Battle of Ocotlan. This being the first market day since the fight, Chapala, then the commercial capital (and sufficiently removed from the present seat of war) was crowded with eager gossipers. Hence, when Don Rodrigo and his cavalry suddenly rode in on the scene, there was intense excitement. Before that force the town was at its leader's mercy. He soon received confirmation of the news regarding Vicente. He even received better information of the number he must fight. It seemed there were between one and two thousand horse now in Jiquilpan. A seriousness settled over his men when this became known. Rodrigo sat his horse in silence and looked them over, slowly. They read his mind, rallied round him, threw up caps with cheers, and swore to follow him into the jaws of death.

He rode then to the beach. His expectations were not unfounded. This busiest of all commercial days brought thither many vessels. They stood in a long line, sterns to the shore, on the glassy water. Some lay anchored farther out. The western sun, casting his yellow glare over all the motionless lake, threw shadows of masts, black lines in the yellow.

They were speedily counted.

"Nineteen," said Bonavidas.

"And six from Ajicjic and San Antonio," replied Rodrigo. "Twenty-five. Not enough. We must have thirty at the least. Bonavidas, go, you and thirty men. Ride east for not a minute longer than half an hour. Chapala is on a right angle that juts into the lake. Ride yonder and you will strike water again. There are sometimes boats there. Seize every vessel you find and pole it to the bluff at the foot of St. Michael. You can return before I have succeeded in packing these poor fish into those boxes."

Bonavidas and his thirty men rode away.

Where the rocky hill that stands over Chapala laves its foot in the water there was, and still is, a ledge of rocks. The road led over this rise, and the ledge, immediately at the shore, was a little cliff six feet in height, rising perpendicularly out of deep water. The place is now much altered by blasting and civilized improvement. On the very spot where Rodrigo loaded his vessels (a spot some hundreds of yards west of the stretch of beach and the famous old *salati*) there now stands a beautiful modern villa. Times, even here in inert Mexico, have changed!

A proclamation was speedily issued to the people. Every *canoa* capable of crossing the lake with a horse was to be temporarily confiscated to the use of the government. Care should be taken of them. They should be at the owner's disposal the following morning. Those owners who so desired might send one man each or themselves go, to accompany the boats. Such cargo as the vessels contained would better be at once unloaded. There was amazement at this beyond all saying. The crowd was thunder-struck. What impossible deed did this

portend? There was some grumbling. There was more curiosity. Rodrigo's ever-ready manner and diplomacy won some favor. There was a scramble for the boats, and a hasty pitching out upon the sand of such fruits or vegetables or rude furniture as they contained. Hence, willingly or unwillingly, whether they cursed or laughed, with two hundred armed cavalrymen looking complacently on, the shippers gave up their property.

Rodrigo despatched his men to the vessels, the horses being herded on the beach. There was a hilarious removal of sandals and shoes and a rolling up of trousers, shouts, jests, boisterous fun, and a splashing of water and climbing to boats.

"Now," cried Rodrigo, "all hands to poles — and may the Virgin give us two more hours of calm!"

Rude little row-boats went scudding out to such *canoas* as lay at a distance. Brawny arms and backs were strained at the poles. Brown legs moving along the upper side ledges of the vessels swelled with exertion as the great hulls glided slowly over the mirror of the lake. In half an hour they were halted in line at the bluff, where the ledge of rock, high as the boats' sides or a trifle higher, was only so wide as to permit the loading of three vessels at once. The town was scoured for timbers. Heavy planks fifteen feet in length were thrown from the rock to the sterns, and the bridges were made. The work was done with feverish energy and in what order the haste and the novelty permitted.

"They can cross the bridge easily enough," said a soldier. "But they cannot get under the roofs."

"Then tear the roofs away," said Rodrigo.

Hammers and timbers for levers were speedily at

work. One by one the thatches were torn off and thrown aside. A groan went up from the crowd of townspeople at this. It was not to be helped. Rodrigo grimly directed the work. He had the power in his hands; he had entered on this course. It would have taken a bloody protest to make him abandon it. The horses meanwhile had been fed. They were now watered at the lake's edge.

Out of the *meson* Clarita had come. She had seen all and knew the purpose of it. With only the light of her eyes, the slight pink flush of her face, and the absence of her dimples hinting what she felt, she crossed the plaza toward St. Michael. In a crowd of townspeople, going in that direction also, she was but an unnoticed unit. She made no haste. She was joined, as she entered the street leading to the ledge of rocks, by Pepa's mother, who came running after her. Pepa's mother was worn to thinness with worry over her daughter.

"My girl will be brought home to me dead," murmured she, gloomily. "Clarita, I have seen it in twenty dreams."

Clarita did not seem to hear. Neither did it appear that she saw Pepa's mother or any of the crowd. She was quiet and dignified, where others ran and were turbulent. She left the crowd before she reached the ledge of rocks where Rodrigo was, and to which the horses were now being led by threes and fours. That wonder of an insane deed made others crowd about the spot — her it kept at a distance. She went through an open *patio* of a house she knew that stood at the base of the little mountain. The walled court was empty, and its many pomegranate trees were as still as painted ones. She sighed heavily and crossed to the rear,

feeling as deserted as this lonely court. She came out of the rear wooden door and found herself at the mountain's lower rocks. Then she began to climb. The mountain side was steep and strewn with boulders. It was covered, too, with shrubs and flowering plants. She rose gradually, and was above the roofs of the houses, so that all the town was like an irregular floor of flat red tiles, the lake half surrounding it. It was as though she stood on an island. She saw Bonavidas and his men riding to the northeast a mile away. She saw a few *canoes* in that direction too, round the far side of the cape on which Chapala stands.

It was not at these she cared to look. She climbed still a little higher, and then went round on the mountain side till she stood just over the ledge of rocks and the crowd of people. Then she watched it all. From the *jefe* and his men, the scrambling horses and the distrustful crowd, she turned her eyes many times across the lake to the southeast. Tizapan, Jiquilpan, lay there where those distant, hazy peaks rose out of the water. Oh! that it were not so many miles across that shining mirror, that she might, at least, see!

The loading of the first *canoe* began with vigor and haste. Looking back from this distance on that time, and remembering the slow movements of Mexicans, the strangest feature of the day is the rapidity with which the man concluded his unusual task. The horses were left saddled and bridled. There was to be no extra space for saddles in these boats. The bridge of planks being laid from rock to stern, the first horse was led across. He stopped in the middle, terrified, and pulled back. He was cajoled, and finally dashed at the boat snorting, men

before him pulling and men behind him pushing. Other shorter boards were slanted within the vessel from the high stern to the floor. The inclination was necessarily extreme to leave the boat's naked bottom unencumbered. The animal, dashing in as he did, instead of running down this last decline, slid. He arrived at his destination with some of the skin removed from his hind legs, so that his owner cursed viciously. The beast, trembling and flinching, was led as far fore as possible. Across the bows and some distance toward the vessels' middles are heavy staying timbers, too low for a horse to pass under. Hence all the snorting cargoes must be crowded in the spaces aft of these timbers, — spaces comprising three fourths of the boats. The horses were placed sidewise. It was found their heads, in some instances, were high enough to permit their looking over into the water. As so unusual a sight may terrify an animal naturally sensitive as a good horse is, in many cases it was found necessary to replace the halves of the thatches, fastening them perpendicularly instead of inclined, to the boats' sides. The horses thus blinded were more quiet.

That effect of skinned legs was repeated with exasperating frequency. It made no difference to Rodrigo. The wounds were slight. He urged the loading on with an indomitable energy and goodwill that inspired similar qualities in his men. There was frequently much trouble. One horse, having started across the planks, broke suddenly back through the crowd with something like a scream, jerked him who held the bridle into the water, and dashed away not to be caught. Others struggled and kicked. But two hundred men ready

at hand can accomplish much. Certain beasts were literally carried across the bridge.

Thus the work went on, three vessels at a time. The three being filled, each was manned and poled into the lake, and others were brought up. Beasts were packed in some like cattle in cars — in some, tighter. There was occasionally a scuffle of loaded animals within and the noise of an equine dispute. Still the bare-armed men pulled and pushed, yelled and beat and persuaded, till each unwieldy bulk slid with a thud to the boat's flat bottom. Nearly every minute Rodrigo looked away to the west and scanned the regions of the setting sun. That sun came down huge and red, and little clouds along its course lit a score of colors. The air was yet as silent as the peaks.

"It will come," cried he, "and it comes quickly. On with it! Ah, Bonavidas — what luck?"

"Found five," said Bonavidas; "they are coming. I have found, too," continued he, "another thing."

He leaped from his horse. At that moment, pushing their way through the crowd up the little ascent, came some of Bonavidas' companions bringing a man in their midst.

"I found this fellow under suspicious circumstances," said Bonavidas, pointing at the prisoner. "We were wading through a marsh at the lake's edge, something over two miles from here round the point. There was a *canoe* pulled up there in the mud, looking as though it had n't been used for months. There were three big rocks there, too, that made a corner. By St. Thomas, there was a saddled horse standing hid in those rocks! The place is wild, and there is n't a soul living for miles. So it was queer. We got the horse, waded out,

and went into the boat. When we jumped in this person leaped up out of a sound sleep. Well, I was taken aback at his face. I can take a plain grave or a dead body or a good honest murder and never flinch. But this man's countenance having the looks of all three, and yet living—I was taken aback. So, after glaring at me like a goblin, he suddenly jumped over into the water and made at the rocks. He was after his horse. The horse wasn't there and I ordered a chase, and we took him. He acted like a caught rat. Said I, He may be a messenger of the enemy hiding till dark. So I took him. There was a little boat that I think was his, tied at the rocks, oars and sail and provisions. When I questioned this man he acted deaf. He acted crazy, too. He fell flat down and grovelled like a slave; then he got up and that hellish face of his looked damned troubled, and he kept pointing out over the water. I said, 'Come on, Señor Inferno, we'll to the captain. I am somewhat of a skeleton myself'—Ha! ha! So here he is, and the horse and the provisions."

The creature thus described shrank like a slave indeed in the midst of his captors. He might formerly have been a man of good size. He now looked withered, crouching. His manner was like that of one come out of the dark, one having been buried away for many years, who sees day and hears voices and has nature and humanity about him for the first time, and is dumb and afraid. They urged him on to the *jefe* and he came, cowed and sullen. He was so still that, in that evident dumb dread, one expecting him to tremble would have observed with wonder the stillness. He pushed back his sombrero, showing long matted black hair, and raised his face

to Rodrigo. The brow and the eyes were those of a man of superior intelligence, but in the latter there was no light. The chin, too, would have been strong and firm, but that a distortion extended even to it. From the right corner of the mouth almost to the ear stretched a great scar drawing all the skin of the face's right side into revolting ugliness. Rodrigo was somehow made silent by the vision. He knew he had seen that face, and where. He remembered the long night of his escape and the figure he had followed, the glimpse of the face at the monastery. To have seen it once was never to forget it. Long since he had been assured that there was some vital connection between that very monastery where Vicente had been educated and the revolution. His suspicions of the man were at once deepened. He must hold him prisoner. But he was softened in his presence, like one who hears the hollow ravings of the insane and feels, settling over him, a consciousness of the insane's blackened life. After a moment's silence the *jefe* said:

"Tell me who you are, friend. You shall not be hurt. If you cannot speak, can you at least hear?"

The figure suddenly stooped down to the sand of the road and wrote in it with his finger:

"I am nothing. Let me go. He will starve."

"Who will starve?"

He arose, and pointed across the water to the east.

"Crazy," said Bonavidas.

At this the dull eyes of the stranger grew lurid. He turned to Rodrigo and went down on the ground again, raising his hands and distorting his face still more. Then he went through in a kind of panic the most indescribable movements of pleading.

There was no time to lose; and it were better to

keep this prisoner. He might be some clever actor, an enemy, and a messenger. But where to keep him? Chapala's friendship was uncertain, and the jail was broken open, some prisoners having escaped with the aid of friends since the withdrawal of the *jefe's* men. There was but one thing to do, and the decision was quickly made.

"Search him and two of you guard him. I will take him with me across the lake," said Rodrigo.

Feeling as though he had come out of a bad dream he turned away to his work. The man was searched and nothing found. He was led to the foot of the mountain and kept there.

Meanwhile, the loading had gone steadily on and the noise of it was the noise of scrambling beasts and shouting men and laughing spectators. The sun neared the horizon and all the west was ablaze. The vessels from San Antonio arrived at five o'clock, poled slowly along the shore, their pointed prows cutting the motionless lake like steel and their dripping poles gleaming. At that hour the work was not half done. The five additional vessels Bonavidas had discovered in his two mile journey came in at half-past five.

"Bonavidas, you are my friend in need," said the *jefe*. "We are thirty sail now, if my old Indian from Ajicjic arrives before the wind knocks this rickety loading scheme into impossibility. Hurry, boys! Pray for yet another hour of calm."

As he spoke, round Angostura point nearly two miles from the west came floating the black hull and slim mast of the only vessel that lacked. There was a cheer at sight of it. It seemed now nothing could prevent a happy outcome.

"Unless," said Bonavidas, "the wind comes not,

and we are left hanging out, boxed up with a lot of horses in a dead calm. Pleasant night would that be."

The two boats now being poled to the ledge Rodrigo knew. They were the "Delirium" and the "Goddess Venus." As usual Doroteo's men had brought their cargoes of fruit. The *jefe* smiled a grim smile at those vessels, remembering their owner, his feline manner, his pointed moustaches, his animal ferocity in the fight.

"I can confiscate these," said he, "with a good conscience."

Ten horses were crammed into the "Goddess" and eight into the little "Delirium," which could with difficulty hold even that number.

The girl, high up on the mountain side, still watched it all. They had brought that crouching prisoner thus; would there be another prisoner on the morrow brought so before his captor? If such should be, thought she sadly, he will hold his head more erect than this. Two hundred and twenty-nine horsemen she counted—two hundred and twenty-nine. How happy they were! How eager they were! Strange, strange world it is; over that which is laughter to some, others, alas, must weep! She had never felt so lonely; she had never seen all the earth so homeless. At least the lake, the lake that was the mother of them all, might be her friend. Perhaps it would bring no wind. She looked again and again across the miles of water. It was to her as though she were at fault for not piercing that distance and seeing under those peaks. She grew restless. To see them preparing; to see them go; to watch them long, long—lessening sails, darkening sky, rising waves; to lose them at last yonder in

the distance where her brother was; to find herself alone in the midst of night, the army gone to seek him, the darkness and the silence only for her, and the bitter dreams of the things that would happen there under the southern peaks. To watch one's own army with one's own blood in it march away, this many a woman knows to be a bitter thing. To sit thus in calm and see your blood's enemy prepare his forces, laugh over the future that hangs so heavily over you, and to be unable even to go to the scene of the fight, this, too, is a bitter thing.

"Oh Holy Mary!" said she, clasping her hands on her knees, "how am I to sit thus and see them go!"

She, too, watched the west. She prayed, almost holding her breath, that there where the mountains lowered and rounded the narrow western end with blue, she might see no white mist. She was fearful when she looked. It became pain to look. But her fears were of no avail.

Few are the spots where the sunsets are such as these. The red ball came to the mountain's summit and seemed to rest a moment as balancing himself on that jagged line of porphyry, glaring, a monstrous eye of fire that poured light over all the lake till the thirty vessels, outraging the region's majestic peace, were thirty burning coals in the red flood. The great circuit of peaks round all the two hundred and fifty miles of the water's circumference lit a thousand fires. That porphyry gleamed with every shade of color from dazzling white, to emerald, to blue, to purple, to the red of red blood. Fleecy clouds glistened with the tints of shells: vapor banks in the west towered dark with blazing edges. Streamers of flame lay stretched over the zenith. Even the east answered with fleeting fires.

The red ball was gone and the fires were fading. She put her hand for the twentieth time over her eyes and looked away to the west. And the white mist was there — the mist she knew — far away, fleecy, beautiful; but to her it was another and a heavier grief. She knew the wind was coming.

Rodrigo saw it too. Nearly every evening from September to June, while the dry season lasts, the wind comes up from the west. It usually arrives at sunset or a little after or a little before. It is sometimes much later, and rarely it comes not at all. He had counted on something near a certainty. His heart bounded when he saw that mist. There were six boats left to load and the one from Ajicjic was near at hand. He spurred his men on to double efforts. The knowledge of a quickly coming wind was like wine to them. The first three of the six *canoas* were brought up. The white mist was a little larger and a little whiter. There came, out of the midst of the sunset's beauties, a little breeze. It struck the cheek with a sudden coolness. And as suddenly as a pebble might have stirred it the water crinkled like *crêpe*. The breeze continued dallying, wonderfully light. The mist came a little closer and then suddenly dispersed. Then the wind was there, blowing black hair about sweating faces, cotton skirts about the limbs of women, dust from the road. The crinkled water rose of a sudden in small waves, and the vessels were lifted a little and sank.

The one from Ajicjic arrived and the loading of the last three was entered upon. The waves from this time increased gradually and not slowly. This last loading was very difficult. The planks rose and sank irregularly, the vessels heaved, the horses made trouble. But a stern determination entered the men.

Twenty or thirty soldiers seized each ship and literally by main force kept it from demolishing its bridge or dashing itself against a rock. The beasts were hauled, pushed, carried, half thrown into the *canoas*. With a final ringing shout the thing was done.

The girl on the mountain could no longer sit where she had been. She must stand. There was in her now a restlessness such as she had never known. The wind was there; a little more and it would take them all away. She mechanically counted the vessels loaded. Not all had been necessary for the horses. The rest were for the men. By systematic and daring packing Rodrigo had made those clumsy barks average a capacity of ten animals each. He had thus used twenty-three *canoas* for the horses. Each of these carried three soldiers besides, in many cases, the owner or owner's agent. This left one hundred and sixty-one men, including Rodrigo and his prisoner, for the remaining seven vessels, in itself a somewhat reckless proportion. Yet these seven were thus less burdened than were those that carried the horses. Clarita saw the seven brought, rolling somewhat, near the beach or the cliff, and the men rushing for them. She saw, too, Rodrigo in the last light of the day, standing on the rocks directing them.

She had known him long. This misguided man, thought she, has been my friend. He is my enemy now, but he has a kind nature. She stood a moment more, wretched, her heart throbbing. The peaks were the same—the unknown morrow. Could she stay and see it, remembering Vicente's wishes, her promise, the danger? To her the question was not would she stay—rather could she? Was it possible to crush her heart like that? The waves were rising, the men were climbing in. She saw it again, the

vision of them going, the lessening sails, the disappearance, and the blank blackness left to her. She prayed then a little to the Virgin Mary, caught her skirts, and went as fast as boulders would let her down the mountain. She came running breathless to a boat at the rock. The men were all in save those who held it from beating on the little precipice, and the *jefe* himself. He was preparing to enter this one that rose and fell on the waves. The spray dashed over her dress. They had put the long planks to the stern. The bridge was fearfully unsteady. She passed Rodrigo like a quick flying shadow, ran across the heaving timbers and was within.

Rodrigo was astounded. He ran in after her, calling her. She would not reply — because she could not, and dared not even turn. She went on the boat's bottom away to the bow, as though she felt he was pursuing her. He came, too, calling to her gently. She was shaking, then, from head to foot and went down on her knees in the bow and sobbed. The last of the soldiers speedily embarked. There were more than twenty men on board. Rodrigo strode ahead of them and came to her. Whereat she turned suddenly with her face up to him.

"Will you, then," she cried, "kill me, too?"

That cut him to the quick. He was a man meek before her from then on. It had never come to him thus, that he, Don Rodrigo, was cruel to this pure woman.

"What is it you wish, Clarita, little one?" said he tenderly. "There is great danger here."

"But then, you will let me go! I know you will let me!" said she.

"What shall I do?" cried he helplessly.

Then she caught his hand and pleaded with an earnestness that would have moved a stone.

"You are my brother's enemy," she said at last. "You are going to kill him — and this is why I cannot bear to stay. You were always kind — you are kind enough to be good to me. This would kill me, not to go."

Don Rodrigo had never been moved thus before. There came suddenly to him an unreasoning desire that she should indeed go. At all events she would not return. Hence, somewhat bewildered, he ordered the sail hoisted and the journey begun — and he let her stay.

The ship was first poled some distance out, as were the rest. They were scattered, then, as widely as could be. Sail after sail went up, spread its great square extent to the wind, bulged round with it; and the journey was begun. The wind came from the west. Tizapan lay southeast. The course was easy. A good speed will bring these craft to Tizapan before dawn. The perilous plan was in full operation. Rodrigo heaved a heavy sigh. He left the girl and sat high up in the bow and looked away to Tizapan.

"The loads of men," said he dreamily to himself, hearing her as she came and leaned over the boat's side behind him, "the loads of men are somewhat safe. But if there should come a storm, heaven have mercy on the loads of horses!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE town of Tizapan lies at a short distance from the lake. The shore in that region is no such distinctly marked line of beach and rock as it is at Chapala. It is not even always easy to tell where the shore is. Between water and land there is a stretch of marsh for several hundred yards, watery, pierced by the spears of a million reeds that rise thick and green to a height of some feet. Here flock ducks in great numbers. The marsh is flat, bewildering, and dreary. Through its middle a stream, called the Tizapan River, cuts out more than one course, having formed a delta. The main course of this river, not over twenty yards at its widest part, usually much narrower, is navigable for *canoas* for half a mile to a point where the land is dry and from which the town lies yet another mile distant. The stream being crooked and the curves sharp, the progress from the open lake to the inner landing is usually made by poles. The lake approach to the town could be easily blocked by blocking the river. Only the one course is navigable. Nobody could cross the marshes. This fact was recognized more than a century ago.

The town itself is like the greater part of Mexican towns, narrow and crooked streets with the low houses (joined together) shutting those streets in and making them seem even narrower, and the central plaza of considerable size left vacant. That plaza

is to-day filled with flowers and fruit and contains a band-stand. In former times it was bare. The mountains rise only a little way behind the town, jagged and huge. Before them is a stretch of rolling green fields. The river, coming from the peaks, dashes down through this pastoral scene with a vivacity that has laid bare a rough and rocky bed whereon the water boils till it passes through the town. At the time when the two small armies were approaching Tizapan, much of the summer green was still on field and mountain. The unclouded sun poured his light over an emerald gem of the lake's border.

Nearly a week of peace and triumph, and no sight of the enemy, had begun to give to Vicente something more of a feeling of freedom. With constant outlook on all the roads before and behind him, and across the lake, he believed he should have ample notification of the approach of an enemy. For this reason he consented to the departure of Quiroz from Jiquilpan. The latter desired that he himself and such companions as he should choose should constitute the advance party to be sent forward to Tizapan. Such a party, which should communicate with the clergy concerning quarters and food for the troops, was desirable to open the way. Wherever possible, messengers had thus ridden ahead.

Tizapan, being Doroteo's native place, was naturally intimately known to him. It was the largest town on the southern half of the circuit. It was a centre of the priesthood. It had been the intention from the first to make of it a temporary source of supplies. It held in secret large stores of weapons and ammunition. Add to these considerations the fact that it was intended, should it be found the

enemy was approaching, to fortify this town and make it the scene of the next struggle (for it could be rendered almost impregnable) and it will be readily seen that he who should now advance to that spot must be one capable of acting with intelligence and authority. Quiroz was that man.

When he was sent, with assistants, Pepa Aranja, headstrong as always, appeared suddenly, ready mounted also, and galloped out of Jiquilpan after him.

It was thus that on a brilliant morning a party of four left the last considerable town east of Tizapan and rode at a good gait between peak and water toward the latter place. They were Fortino and Anastasio, Quiroz and the girl. The two former rode in unsociable silence, and, spurring up irregularly, found themselves at length some distance in advance of their companions. Pepa was on this day dressed in dark blue. She never lost sight of the value of the appearance of her clothes. She carried behind her saddle a pack wherein was bound up such wardrobe as she considered most effective. Her dark blue skirt was not a long riding skirt. It was a dress of ordinary length. She wore high leather boots under it, and the toes of these, small, were visible at the stirrup and the saddle's side. Her hair, that shining black hair, was braided in a thick braid down her back. It was remarkably long. Her head was covered by a small, light, man's sombrero of straw tied about by a dark blue ribbon. The effect of this odd and unconventional costume was to increase her beauty by changing its details.

"Never the same," said the gleaming-eyed Doroteo riding at her side. "By my soul, you are a thousand women, and strange ones."

She had tossed the night away, restless, on a hard bed in the house of a friend of Quiroz in Jiquilpan. She had not so much as closed her eyes. They seemed, therefore, larger than usual, inclined to hollowness, looking out at him with the fire of her deep struggle in them. Her face, too, grown a little thinner, had that strained, tense expression of the nervous and the extremely alert. It was, in the light of this day, a face that would have held the attention of the dullest boor.

"The señorita has not slept," said Quiroz, wrapping the reins about his slender fingers and his slender fingers about the reins. "What is it that sits so heavy on the heart, the light, light heart?"

"It is that the world is wrong," said she. "As for sleep — I cannot think when I am asleep."

"Hence you toss the night long and rise looking as though your soul, half tiger's, half woman's soul, were just behind your eyes. Ha! a good thing, no doubt. The rose buds and the rose blows, and even that, alas, is not the end of the rose!"

He said this meditatively, looking away at the dancing waters, that cold look never absent from his eyes. There were, too, on his firm chin and shut jaws and about the cheeks and temples, marks of the wild life he had led. There was a kind of a long-strained repose in him, even in movement, that was like the silence of a steel blade.

"Doroteo," said she, turning her own solemn eyes on him, "you can read me somewhat. I am restless these days, that is plain to you. I do not know — I grow lonely also." She made an impatient movement of the head. "The world did wrong by me, putting me in a woman's body. No, I do not sleep — I grow unhappy."

She permitted her eyes to remain on his face even long after he had turned again to her.

"It springs up," said he, smiling a flickering smile, "out of rocky ground. It flourishes and sways in the suns of many weeks, and blooms. Well, drop the figure. The woman is suddenly there. She flaunts red, red colors like the rose, and runs riot with life. And she droops and the red fades. Alas! — even in the desert the canker came." He fastened his eyes full on her. "Pepa, there are other spots than the desert. Is there, then, nowhere, no way, a satisfaction for the life of the rose?"

That old burning in her temples was visible again. She looked dissatisfied.

"I have looked," said she, giving him always her full gaze, "and I have not seen it."

That steeliness of Quiroz somewhat lessened, warmed. He let his horse come nearer to hers.

"Quiroz is a gambler," said he, with a quietness in which a cynical tone was barely heard. "He is a rake. I am not that man that my mother and the other good women would have had me. This is because I was born a little too wild. I know the surface of the earth, having wandered over it; and the bodies of men, having wounded some of them. I am hard, full of a cold blood that they would say came out of hell, only that they have the idea hell is hot. Therefore I cannot understand anything that anybody feels. A rake never feels. A gambler never knows the value of a blush, the truth of shame, the canker of disappointment. No, I am outside the pale. Do not fancy I cannot see the difference between myself and honest folk."

"Ah, Doroteo," she said, with a little impulsive movement of the hand, "not every one, not every one thinks of you so."

He was singularly stimulated by her tone. He would not take his eyes from her. Her face seemed to him luminous.

"If there were one that did not," said he, with an intensity half sad, half fierce, "one only. A gambler takes his luck; he smiles, however the play goes. But he is not altogether incapable of a longing. I am no fit companion for women; but I was born with the ability to distinguish them. I should like to say that to the world and let the world once know that an adventurer may possess a virtue that is all too rare among the sleek."

What was she thinking? Why did her face grow bright with a kind of solemn brightness, and the color come to her cheeks? She looked away, over the lake. The small waves danced and glittered. The blue peaks opposite looked mistily dreamy. Somewhere beyond them, she guessed, Don Rodrigo was coming. She brought her eyes back and smiled on Quiroz her brilliant smile, but it was tenderer now, with something in it suggestive of sorrow.

"Doroteo," said she, "not every one is bound up in the set beliefs. There are some, may be, bound to nothing, wilder than the adventurer. I, at least, know there is a heart in you."

He seized her hand; which she drew away, but gently, still smiling at him.

"Oh!" she cried, "you are brave—you are wild as I am wild! You dare the world!"

"Listen," said he, half whispering it and gleaming on her. "You too have doubted the outcome of all this."

She did not reply. Whether or not she encouraged him he could not know, but with the gambler's instinct, and still carrying the winelike effect of her words, he risked it.

"Vicente is no common man," said he. "None can appreciate him more justly than can I. But—there is needed something else than battles. There is needed a constructive ability. Then, too, the battles themselves will grow more fierce, and soon. Pepita, I am afraid—and I say it with sincerity—that the cause needs more daring, more strength than his."

Still she made no reply. She looked like one in fever. She kept her eyes on him and they led him more surely than could have any words from her.

"Pepa," he said, "you too have the player's instincts. Where the stake is highest and action fiercest, I see you there always. Whose is the dominant force in this march? Yours. Whose is the spirit that has entered the army? Yours. Let me say nothing of myself. Let me shift to the other view of me and say only this"—he grew fervent, passionate—"say the thing I have longed and burnt to say. Pepa Aranja, I would follow you and you only into the bottom of Hell. I would perjure my soul for you. I could curse Heaven, such is my madness. Give me one word—no—your heart, your heart I must and will have. Pepa—"

They were riding between boulders and the lake over a sandy path. A turn round a foothill to the front had taken their companions from sight. He seized her hand again as it lay on the saddle's horn. He deftly stopped both horses side by side. He would not let her tear her fingers away. The piercing light of his eyes had never before held such intensity.

Her struggle to loose herself was not real. She ceased struggling, sat up straighter and taller, and smiled at him again.

"What?" said she, with something like mocking girlishness that did not cover a certain solemnity; "I am not fit to love, I am fit only to run wild — like an animal."

She turned her head away, blushing, and seemed to try to withdraw her hand. But he held it.

"Then let me run wild with you!" he cried. "And in that wildness we will accomplish, with the love of armies, things that others, without us, must fail to accomplish! Pepa, do you understand me? What is birth? What is blood? Nothing! Power is the law."

She looked slowly behind and before her, then again across the lake. She was for a moment unreadable, in which moment, too, she looked worn and thin. Then the blushes came back and the smiles, and she turned to him. He saw a thing, when she turned, that lashed his passion into a fury. There were tears suddenly shining in her dark eyes.

"Promise me," she said, he still holding her hand, "promise me that, whatever I will, that you will do. Him who speaks thus to me and loves me, I make prove himself. *Ay de mi!*" She laughed a little rippling laugh, brought the long, shining braid of her hair over her shoulder, and passed it lightly across his hand; whereat a thrill ran through him. "*Ay de mi!* This touch of the braid is the magician's touch. See how imperious I have grown, hearing your love for me! Is it thus you love me? Then — promise me!"

"On your woman's soul," he said, with something like reverence, "I swear it."

She suddenly tore her hand from his and spurred away, laughing blushing over her shoulder.

They came round the rocky corner that hid them

from their companions.. They perceived, a hundred yards ahead, the great Fortino wheeling his horse close to that of Anastasio and beating Anastasio roundly with a small stick. There seemed to be a quarrel on hand which the lank recipient of the beating took with much calm.

"What is the matter with you two clowns?" cried Quiroz ill-humoredly, riding up with the girl. "What kind of a discord is this in the army!"

"There is no discord whatever," whined Anastasio as the beating ceased and Fortino, red and perspiring, went on in fumes of wrath. "This big lime-kiln of a man is the only one doing anything; and his vile deeds are in full harmony with his character, I'll swear Heaven."

"He cavils at me," grumbled Fortino, "and has no veneration for the most sacred feelings of a man. I was swearing that I would follow Vicente and his fortunes faithfully into the deep sea. I would prove constancy, following doggedly, which I will, too, with the faith of a dog; and I will try to prove this statement."

"And I say," said Anastasio, "that he does n't appear to know the nature of faith. It is not in dogs that you find faith. I have seen many a fine dog follow his master about with his soul and his faith apparently in his eye, for a day. Whereas they were in his stomach; for when he was fed he lay down and slept and his master might, for all of him, walk straight to the tail of the devil. It is this honest view of mine over which Fortino makes trouble," continued Anastasio, in a tone of discouragement.

"Then you tell us, old Solomon," grunted Fortino, "what faith is; you who know."

"Well," said Anastasio speculatively, removing his

hat and scratching his head, "I should say faith is a sticking to a thing till it is eat up, regardless of the wants of others."

The girl had seemed not to listen. She stared away, pale, across the lake.

"In your ideas of faith," said Fortino with contempt, "where does the advantage to anybody else come in?"

"Faith," replied the other, "I should say is distinctly a personal matter. Others may derive benefit from the example, and thus be enabled to stick to the next thing till it, too, is eat up. This, friends, is world philosophy."

"I will yet teach you another kind," muttered the gloomy giant. "I am a poor old tanned leather hide, I am. Well, may be so, may be so. I failed in the first battle. I have been ridden down by remorse for it. But there will be another enemy and other days and other examples of faith that can go into the sea."

He sank into a silence from which he could not be drawn during the whole of the day. The girl was as silent as he. She said scarcely a word throughout the long journey. She remained pale, overcast with meditation, seeming unhappy. There was a little of the burning still about her temples when they entered Tizapan.

CHAPTER IX

EVENING was coming down on the town when Doroteo and his three companions rode into it. The fruit orchards cast long shadows over the fields and the rocky bed of the stream was cut, by adobe walls, into yellow bars of light and darker bars of shade. Half way between the town and the water the road that leads round the lake cuts at right angles the road from the river landing to the plaza. Hence a party coming from either direction along the lake's shore would enter Tizapan by the same way, the mile-long road from the river. Into this last Doroteo and his companions turned after crossing the stream by the only bridge. Looking to the right, the north, down this narrow way, the river landing with a few huts about it could be seen some hundreds of yards distant at the beginnings of the marsh. The huts were dilapidated and dirty. The marsh was green and flat and waste. The lake beyond lay many-colored in the sunset. The entire scene was a silent, deserted one. Both to east and west the lake-circling road was deserted likewise. To the left, the south, toward which point they turned, the short river road was, for less than half a mile, flanked by high, thick, irregular stone walls beyond which lay waste land, sandy and brown, cut by mountain spurs. The four traversed this distance between the walls approaching the town, the river landing behind them. When the walls ceased it was to give place to adobe houses

whose continuous extent abruptly began the street at a point yet another half-mile from the central plaza.

"What kind of a town, in the name of the saints, do you have here?" said Fortino in a bass growl of wonder. He had never been at this spot before, in spite of having lived many years on the opposite side of the lake. "I will swear we have ridden nigh the sixth of a league in this tunnel of a street and there has been never another street crossing it, nor a break in the joined walls of the houses. This way might be a cañon of rocks for any outlet I see to it. What kind of a trap were your people making out of their town? An unbroken shaft from the lake to the centre, is it? Why are there no streets crossing this street?"

Doroteo laughed a little smothered laugh and his eyes glittered.

"Because," said he, "behind this left-hand wall of houses runs the river, and there is no bridge yet for another mile. What would be the use, friend, of running a street across this one, through these walls, into the rocks of the river? As for the right — well, who knows? Why do we Mexicans do many odd things? Why do we build our houses with nine windows and then brick up five of them as regularly as the clock strikes?"

"As for that part of the town to the right," said Anastasio, "it is not worth getting into, and nobody gets into it that can keep out; and a man once in has no occasion for coming away for he is so drunk with the stench of the foul quarter that he can only sit down and smell himself into his grave. So old fat cock, what do you want with a street into it?"

"Does it continue thus to the plaza?" said For-

tino, stopping his horse, looking up and down, and whistling long and slowly.

"Entirely to the plaza," said Quiroz, "save for one street which you shall see leading into it."

"How easily can the enemy reach the plaza from some other way?"

"From the east, whence we came, he cannot reach it at all with horses, because of the river. For there is but one other bridge besides that which we have used. It is beyond the plaza; or it was. A flood came down in the middle of a clear day last summer and washed it away. It is not yet repaired. There is one narrow spot between rocks that can be crossed on foot by a board; that is all. They are working on the bridge. From the other direction—"

"Yes, come at the other direction. If I have any head for strategy, it is from the west Don Rodrigo will ride."

"From the west he might, if he did not mind winding his horses, make a cut out of the lake road, come round the outskirts of Anastasio's stench, and get into the plaza, from the west also. But the spurs of the foothills come down there, making a jagged difficulty. There is no regular path cut. He would lead a bad chase, and after it all have to enter the town's centre by almost such another tunnel of a street as this, though at right angles to it."

"Si," said Anastasio, "they have taken great pains to wall away the smells of this quarter."

As he rode on a heavy chuckle began to play about within Fortino like a subterranean noise suppressed by the surface of the earth. And as he proceeded the chuckle continued, accompanied at every internal ebullition by a puffing and swelling of the bristled folds on his neck's back. He grew red, too, with

cogitation. They came, still between the walls and amidst some agitated comment from the townspeople, near the plaza; and still he chuckled, at last breaking out:

“A beautifully fortified trap! Oh, let the enemy meet me here!”

At a point some hundred yards from the open plaza the narrow street suddenly turned to the right at right angles to its original line, still keeping its walls intact. It proceeded in this new course for some fifteen yards only, when it abruptly returned to its first direction by making another right angle to left. At this second angle was the only break in the continuous walls of the shaft,—a break caused by the fact that those fifteen yards between the two corners were but a prolongation of another street leading from the quarter of bad smells. So that one having come up the river road, turned the first corner to the right, and traversed the stretch to the second corner, might then continue, without a second turn, straight on into the bad-smelling section, or wheel to the left and proceed along the shaft to the plaza,—a straight course of between eighty and ninety yards. Hence it was that the tunnel-like way led south from the lake and the lake road a mile to the first right angle, turned abruptly west for fifteen yards, then turned again abruptly south to the plaza. In all its course, save at the second turn, so peculiar is the construction of many of these Mexican towns, there was not a crossing alley or path or a break in the bounding walls. A person standing at any point of the stretch of fifteen yards between the two angles could see neither the plaza nor the street leading to the lake.

Immediately at the first angle, standing indeed on

the corner, and on the right of the four as they advanced, was a large, low dwelling of considerable dignity in the town. It was roofed with red tiles and plastered neatly over all its two external sides. The plaster was then colored in fantastic and brilliant manner with swirls of red and streaks of green, possibly representing some fearful species of marble as yet undiscovered save in the fruitful imagination of the Mexican. The effect is a common one here; in the duller-hued north it would be only grotesque; in Mexico, where colors are born in a million variations from the very qualities of the atmosphere, it is not altogether displeasing.

"My ancestral walls," said Doroteo as they rode by, waving his hand at them with courtesy. "I was born there — crucifixion of my soul! — it was on this spot I felt the growth of my wings, and learned virtue. There is a lady in this house now — Heaven waste all its blessing on her! — who has wept over me till what fire I had was near being quenched. Friends, on to the plaza that you may see the lay of the town; then you are to be lodged here."

The girl scanned the gaudy walls and the low, barred windows without pleasure or interest. They turned the house's angle, traversed the few yards of dusty street to the next angle, turned that, and advanced to the central open square. It was now dusk. Shadows of evening lay over walls and bare earth.

There used to be, indeed until recently there still was, in the plaza's centre, a curious relic of the last century. It was a massive chain thirty yards in length, coiled into a heap upon the ground. It had lain coiled there, the town's property, for some scores of years. Its links were each five inches in length and half as many broad. The whole must have

weighed several hundred pounds. Years and rain and sun and rust affected it not. When Fortino rode up and looked at it on that October night it was as mighty and as strong as it was in its long gone youth. It seemed not to have been moved for many years. It was a little sunken in the soil. It was brown, scaling, and covered with dust. He leaped down, lifted a link, and let it drop, and the link clanked with a heavy iron voice. The girl was riding slowly, thoughtfully, round the empty plaza, followed by the town's eyes, but not seeing them. Doroteo and Anastasio had halted, and were looking about at the four rows of sleepy shops and houses that shut in the square, the tiled sheds in their front, the dim lamps and candles within, the openings of two other narrow streets from the mountains.

"More wonders!" said the great Fortino from the ground, where he stooped over the chain. "Quiroz, what in God's name is this?"

"A thing with a fine use," said Quiroz. "In viceroyal days we were as fine a fortified town as ever Europe held. You observed the only approach by land. Good. There is only one by water, and that is not a pathway of flowers, brothers. It is up the river. Well," and he seemed to gloat over the idea, "in old times if trouble was smelled, they stretched that chain across the river at the marshes. But our enemy will come on land—if he comes. Cavalry gallops not over the lake."

A meaning grunt was Fortino's response, as he lifted the link again and listened, swelling and absorbed, to its voice when it clanked rustily back to its fellows. His chuckle was gone. He seemed henceforth wrapped in a dream, a dream which, to judge from his features, must have been hot and stifling.

Meditation in this giant was ever like the moving of ponderous machinery. He heaved himself into his saddle again, unseeing. He followed the others through the fast thickening shade over the course they had come. He seemed unaware of their presence. The chuckle, very much buried, began again as he proceeded. They came at length to Quiroz's birthplace. The gaudy walls were now shadowed. There was no sign of life. In the front nearest the plaza, facing the short stretch of street between the two angles, there was no door, only iron-barred windows. The door was round the corner on the straight way to the lake. They turned both angles and came to it. They were dismounting, when a noise burst from Fortino.

"Damn me!" cried the giant, sweating, "with a strength like mine, damn me! it can be stretched across a street as well as across a river. Let my enemy come!"

It was like a heavy roar, this speech, as it came out. He leaped, infinite mass that he was and heavy as a falling wall, to the ground; and (Doroteo having knocked with an iron knocker and the door to the *patio* being opened by a *mozo*) he followed the others, leading his horse and fuming. The four and their steeds were within.

The *patio*, bricked save for circular, stone-lined spaces about many a tree, was as clean as much labor and good feminine supervision could make it. The house with its wide, low, inner, tiled verandas, shut in but two sides, the sides next the street. The two others were closed by high adobe walls plastered white and brilliant. The brick floors of the verandas, were swept to a perennial redness, and the walls at their backs were as marvellously colored as were

those without. There reigned everywhere thrift, cleanliness, a thousand evidences of supervision and labor. In the house of Doroteo Quiroz there was no Mexican slovenliness. Even the *mozo* wore clothing of unimpeachable whiteness, and was glistening of countenance. He was fat and sleek, too, and received his master with chattering joy. He led the horses through a rear door in the high white wall, to the stables. The four crossed the *patio* to the *corredor*.

At this there was a cry of agitation from the voice of a woman, and an apparition of sky-blue, loosely composed and fluttering in the breeze of its own speed, came running out of a door, across the bricks of the *corredor*, and fell into the arms of Quiroz.

"Doroteo! My little son!" cried she breathless.

She was fully fifty years of age. She had a keen, somewhat bony, white face, out of which eyes of an anxious black brilliancy scanned Quiroz.

"This mother of mine," said Quiroz, holding her at arm's length and looking her over with a kind of gallantry that seemed not suitable to the occasion, "remains the same charming one, let the years thrash away as they like. Friends, here is the lady who had the honor of giving me birth. *Mamacita*, these are friends of mine, precious as gold. You are going to take them into your heart."

"Doroteo," cried she, with piercing anxiety and looking thin and shivering in the loose folds of the sky-blue, "you are come now at last to settle down! Your old mother knows this is the last of your wanderings. They tell me you have done strange things and not been very quiet; and — say, Doroteo, they try to make me believe you are still wild. But does n't

a mother know her own son? Gentlemen, you are friends of his — and the lady — who is the — Oh! I had neglected. Who is the lady, Doroteo?"

"The Señorita Josefa Aranja," said Quiroz with a bow. "She is a traveller. She is a friend of mine. You are to give her the softest bed."

Pepa came forward in silence, and greeted the lady after the Mexican fashion. She did it solemnly.

"Ah — well," murmured the Señora Quiroz, ponderingly interested in the girl, "this will help him to settle down. This is a good sign. A girl may be — may be — Come in, gentlemen, and the señorita."

She led the way in.

"A girl may be necessary to a reform," she added to herself. "She seems a quiet one."

Within, the bricks of the floors were glazed and polished highly. There were high brass candlesticks with lit candles on a table in the centre of the first room. The table held, too, some extraordinary ornaments in the way of paper flowers and artificial fruits of marvellous coloring; a melon whose pottery slices were ever luscious, a mango of a red and yellow such as paint and paint only could induce, a *chirimoya* cracked across its crystal top, and many more. There was a high glass cylinder that protected within it some gaudy thing, whose beauties were altogether without name or precedent. There was a long cane-bottomed and cane-backed sofa against the wall, in front of which, facing each other and placed, in relation to the sofa, at non-convivial angles, were two cane rockers of no common pattern. About one half the rest of the wall other straight-backed chairs, of cane likewise, stood stern as soldiers. Like the parlors of many a Mexican home to-day, it was well kept and clean and proper, but the pointlessness of its ornaments and

the severity of its arrangements, left no possible room for a homelike appearance. It was as cheerless as the glazing of the bricks. Seldom sat any one on the chairs; few visitors came to use the sofa; the fruit and the flowers and the unnamed beauties wasted a perennial sweetness on a desert air. The widowed mistress was more familiar with the kitchen, where servants even now could be heard preparing supper; or with her own bedroom, where there was a crucifix of large size, and where she spent the hours waiting for the time when Doroteo's wild days should have passed.

"Bring us a light, Maria!" cried she, bustling about in a not-to-be-allayed agitation; "come, light this lady to the room beyond my own. No, I will go myself. Follow me, señorita. Ah — he has come back," she continued, leading the way along the *corredor*, entering the room before the girl. "He has come, and the bad days are over. Nobody knows a son like a mother. It is a little waywardness. Why, Doroteo was always a good boy; oh, a love of a boy, Señorita Josefa! He was as plump as the turkeys till he grew tall. Come;" she set the girl's candle on the small wooden dresser; "it worries you too. I have never seen you before, but I have intuition. I judge you at once. You are sad. It worries you too, and a woman longs for his quieting down, you as well as I. I will acknowledge I feel quite a mother to you — Ah! what am I saying! Mary guard an old woman's tongue. It is a — it is a sister that I feel to you; and already! But nobody ever knew a boy's nature as does his mother. And I, old Manuela Quiroz, know he has come to the point of settling down."

"Yes, Doña Manuela," said Pepa, "doubtless he

will," and sighed and turned to the bed. So the old lady left her and went hastily back.

"A good sort of girl," she murmured feverishly. "If this could only come out so! Doroteo, my love, O my boy, my good boy! I can scarcely credit my eyes in seeing you. The fruit orchards are in excellent condition, Doroteo. Señor — What is his name, Doroteo?"

"The biggest one is Fortino. That is name enough. Can you take that vast man into your heart, mother? These are both lovable fellows. Anastasio is as fine a boy to be cuddled as he is long, I'll swear it before God's throne; blasphemous devil that I am!"

"O son! this is harsh talk; must I return to a washing out of your mouth with soap? Ha! ha!" laughing tearfully and much moved with the tender recollection. "It was thus I punished him in the old days. Don Anastasio, I assure you" (she had scarcely looked at Anastasio) "he was so plump, he and his little legs, when he was a boy, that he gave every promise of being as plump a man as yourself."

"Señora," said the extremely lank Anastasio, during a grunt from Fortino, "the slenderer I am the bitterer is your remark. There is nothing plump about me but my admiration of ladies."

"Oh," replied she absently, "I thought Anastasio was the big one. Come, supper is called. We eat on the *corredor*. It is less lonely for a widow; and I am then nearer the door if he — if any one should come."

By Doroteo's attention the men were given means of washing face and hands in a pottery bowl by the kitchen, a courtesy the agitated Doña Manuela had

neglected. Under the low tiles of the wide *corredor*, with the night-shadows of trees just beyond and the sighing of the night wind audible about, the table was spread, white, inviting, candle-lit.

"Doroteo," said his mother, drawing him aside, "they are dressed like the servants. These friends of yours look like peons to me. It is—I suppose whatever you do is all right—now I would believe you always, Doroteo; I always had the utmost faith in you. I never sat down with peons in my life, Doroteo— And—and the girl?"

"These fellows are to do great services. Exceptions are good things. Do you forget I am in war?"

"Holy Mary! I thought you were abandoning the war! Oh! Doroteo, have you not come home to stay?"

"By and by, *Mamacita*," said he, stretching his lips across the teeth.

"Am I, then," she faltered, "encouraging the war? I do not believe in war. And the girl, is she—Sh!—tell your old mother. I always had your full confidence; oh, yes! you always told me everything. Is she—is it—"

She paused, her white bony face lit with her anxiety. He smiled finely on her, and chucked her with a great but elegant gallantry, wherein the cat-like quality of movement was not entirely lacking, under the chin.

"Who knows whither blows the wind!" said he.

The girl, being called by a servant, came then out of her room, deep-eyed, silent. She still wore her hair in the braid. The fishermen, urged, approached, and the five sat down. Waited on by a bright-eyed little Mexican girl and the sleek *mozo*, they ate a supper that satisfied even Fortino. It chanced that

Quiroz finished before the others. He arose, and, appeasing his questioning mother by the announcement that he was off to the priests (which holy purpose comforted the lady), did indeed abruptly depart. The churchmen, he had assured Anastasio and Fortino, would send a servant who, in conjunction with those two warriors, was to spend the night gathering together provision for the army.

"God be praised," murmured Doña Manuela, when the heavy door had clanged to after him (she was eating nothing but staring at the girl), "if he has come to a need of the priests! A man's heart cannot be always hard. He will come to the church before he dies. Señorita, you too cannot eat. Ah — I understand; you could tell it all to me, me who understand! Women's bosoms beat the same in all the world."

The señorita did not reply. Having eaten little, she too arose abruptly and went to her room. Her door closed after her; Doña Manuela and the fishermen were the only feasters left.

"A good, quiet girl," murmured Doña Manuela dreamily. "Señores, she seems like a nice, well-mannered young lady. Oh, if it could be brought about! Surely you can say things to her in his favor — you who know his good qualities. There is nothing so good as a good woman to settle a man down."

"Marriage," sighed Anastasio, by way of saying something encouraging, "is a pleasant thing."

"Nobody knows him as I do," she went on. "These wanderings are not to his inclination. Oh, I know him. It is because he grew so rapidly — this made him restless. But these are not his true inclinations. He is cut out for a quiet life, is Doroteo. Mothers know. Mothers know."

"*Si*," grunted Fortino positively, between mouthfuls, "mothers do know. I knew a mother among the Yaquis that had her son hanged. She knew him, she did, as few knew him."

"This was terrible, Don Fortino," she replied in awe. "But Doroteo was good from his birth. He used to run and pick up the oranges. He was a beautiful child. And when he ran away and was so long gone, it was his restlessness; and he has told me himself that he was not happy. You gentlemen are kind and are friends of his. What is there we three can do together to settle him down? Come," and she settled herself down in fictitious comfort and coziness, making of them, as it were, a harmonious group of three with a common purpose and a common care; "come, we three together can work it out!"

During this conversation one subject of it remained shut in her room. At the *corredor's* shadowed end the heavy wooden door of that room was visible with a point of light issuing from the keyhole, an aperture corresponding in size to the enormous key now in the possession of the girl. No sound issued from that room. The other person thus discussed was in the streets. He had stood a moment outside the *patio's* entrance after the clanging of the door. The night was very windy, and gusts swept up the narrow cañon of the street.

"The lake must be getting high with a wind like this," said he musingly.

He began to hum that same old tune about the red which he had hummed in another day long ago, the day Pepa had jumped into the water. He turned the corner and came into that little fifteen-yard stretch of the street before the second turn. He paused there

a moment at the window of the room he knew was hers. As he did so he heard its door open and shut. He knew the tread of the person who entered, came to a point near the window, and lit a candle. He did not know the meaning of the absolute silence that reigned thereafter — or her thoughts. The window was shut. It was of solid, wooden, door-like parts, with no glass. It was barred by a wooden bar within and by the customary bulging iron ones without, like a prison. He went away toward the plaza swiftly.

“Bah!” said he; “give thanks to whatever Catholic deity did it. I am no *novio* that must stand outside a window.

“‘I won it straight at every whirl.
She would not give it me!’”

The streets of that odd old town were nearly deserted. They were dark, too. The place lay wrapped in a primitive silence. It had grown some and changed in many ways since that long-gone day when the Texcocan prince saw it lying here under the peaks whereon he stood. And, while a descendant, such as he may have held in his half barbaric dreams, was coming to fight, if need be, over his unknown grave, and hearts beat and intrigues went on, and there were signs of a fire of battle in the sky, — doubtless he knew it not, nor cared that the old Texcocan power was dead, died with him, could rise up only like a ghost that flits about and is gone. Quaint old Tizapan, strangest village of your time; where mediæval Europe and ancient Mexico came and lay down together, a lion and a lamb, and slept in peace!

Into the shadows of the bare plaza went Quiroz. Some of the little shops were still open, but he did

not pause at them. He crossed by the iron coil in the centre and went into another street that leads toward the mountains. He came presently to the river, dashing down between high, rocky walls, with the backs of houses shutting it in. He paused and made an examination. The bridge was indeed gone. They had been working at its repair; but, so slow is Mexican labor, it would be long before a horseman could enter the town by that means. A long timber gave a footpath to a rock in the centre, and another long timber led to the opposite side. Doroteo did not cross. He sang yet a little softly, and came back to the plaza. Besides this street to the broken bridge and the one from the river, only one other entered the plaza. It came in on the western side. This was the street he had said an enemy from the west might reach by a tortuous circuit. He turned into it. It was as dark and shaft-like as the other, save that some streets led out of it toward the southern peaks, in which direction lay the more ancient portions of the town. He came to a church and went in. There were a few candles and many images in mysterious shadows, and some women kneeling on the bare floor, wrapped in *rebozos*, and wailing out prayers. A priest was coming out of a door near the altar. Doroteo went to him. There was a moment's conversation, and the priest led him through another side door out of the church, across an open court, and into a building that joined the sacred edifice. The doors of that building were closed after them. For some hours Quiroz was shut in with the man of the church; as he or Vicente had been in many other villages. When he came out at last it was after midnight; and certain later plans of the clergy were clear to him.

In the plaza, now dark save for the starlight and one smoky lamp, he found Fortino and Anastasio.

"These rumors keep knocking my head," grumbled Fortino. "How the devil can they tell he is coming?"

"What? Who?" cried Quiroz.

"Why, they say the *jefe* is coming. Here, boy!"

A boy from a small group that was gathering in the darkness came up.

"What is it they say?"

"They say Don Rodrigo is coming," said he, excitedly. "Everybody says so."

"How is he coming?" inquired Quiroz, without excitement; "what do they say?"

"*Quien sabe!* They say he is coming."

The boy ran away.

"This is the run of them," broke in Anastasio. "They say—they say. Nobody knows. I brand these things as lies."

"Go back to the house, you two," said Quiroz. "I shall join you at once. I, too, believe no such rumors. But I shall soon know."

The two fishermen disappeared down the street toward Quiroz's home, where the white Doña Manuela sat up waiting for the return of her son.

Quiroz's queries were exhaustive. He wandered into many parts of the town. The rumor was certainly persistent, but nowhere could he find foundation for it. He could not even discover any rider who had entered the place since dark, and who might have brought the news.

"Why," said one, "they say he is coming by the lake."

"Ha!" laughed Quiroz, in scorn. "He brings only infantry if he does, — what is that to us?"

He went back to his home, alert, swift. He was

puzzled by these rumors. He came to the *patio* door at one o'clock and went in.

"You have seen the priest, Doroteo, my son?" said Doña Manuela, coming out with a candle, still dressed in the light blue dress and looking wan.

"A jolly good old dog he was, too," said Quiroz, under his breath, paying little attention to her.

"Will you not go to bed now, Doroteo, my son?" asked she, anxiously.

"Presently, mother, presently. Is the lady still in her room; has *she* gone to bed?"

"I can see her light by the cracks," said Doña Manuela, with some eagerness. "Ah, Doroteo, she is a beautiful creature, and a good, quiet one."

"Put me down for a hearty second to that, so much so that I cannot wait. I go to pay court, mother, to this quiet one, now, in the middle of the night."

"Oh, my son!" cried she in consternation. "This is improper!"

"You know Doroteo too well to accuse him of impropriety," cried he, glistening of eye and smiling on her. "Nobody knows a son as does his little mother. Now, say I. Love and war wait for nothing."

"Oh, my son!" cried she, plaintively, as though feeling the awfulness of it, but giving in because he took decision away from her. "Oh, my son! A happy outcome — oh, a happy outcome! This is a strange world."

Fortino and Anastasio were crouched with their blankets in the middle of the *patio*. Quiroz assured them he had been unable to verify the rumors. Then he went to Pepa's door. The night was as still there in the *corredor* by her room as it could have been on the highest peaks.

He knocked lightly. She opened to him at once. He went in boldly, recklessly, and closed the door. The *patio* was left in its nightly peace. Doña Manuela, somewhat horrified, stood stooped and trembling, with the candle in her hand, staring at the door. Fortino and Anastasio at length stretched out on the bricks and slept.

There was then a great struggle in the bosom of Doña Manuela.

"The keyhole is so very large," said she plaintively.

She went a little closer. A mother's anxiety drew her on, yet held her back. Five fearful minutes she spent with her will in the balance.

"Ah, God forgive me!" cried she. "At least it is a little sin. And Doroteo never keeps anything from me. Nay, nay, he tells me all; when he comes out he would tell me all that passed, anyway. How good it is that a mother has thus the confidence of— Oh Doroteo, Doroteo! could you keep aught from me—me who long to know!"

She crept up to the keyhole. It really was very large. They are so to-day in all the smaller places of Mexico, and the keys are of great size. The girl was seated by the table whereon the candle stood. She was plainly in view, with her face toward the door. Her eyes were large and black and her face thin. She was staring at a part of the room the mother could not see, but in which she felt her son to be. Indeed Doroteo's voice was heard.

"It is merely," said he, "that they say he is coming. Only rumors, it may be, but we are to be ready. Pepa, let us come at last to open speech."

The old lady was so agitated by the mystery of these words she could not hear the reply. There

was other conversation within. At length she distinguished this from the girl:

"Doroteo Quiroz will keep to me his promise more surely than to the God he no more than half believes."

Full of wretchedness Doña Manuela awaited the answer to this slander; would fain have defended her son from so blasphemous and unexpected a remark. She saw a strange and dazzling smile on the nervous face of the girl within. She heard her son step nearer the table. She still could not see him.

"But is the promise, then, to be mine only?" cried he. "You give me smiles — you give me no other proof. I follow you like the lost one that I am, caring for nothing so that I be under your eyes. You are a gambler, in your soul, as much as I. How do I know I am to have, for my promise and its fulfilment, one caress from the lips that can smile so? I will have it — I will have it now! *Muerte de Dios!* if I have held you once I can wade through fire. Come, words are nothing to Quiroz."

He came very near her. She was suddenly on her feet. At first, like a panther and looking majestically beautiful, she held him off by the very look. But in that moment she learned more of the man with whom she had to deal and of his desperation than she had learned in all her previous acquaintance with him. Her face was like white flame; but it gradually softened. It was no less white, but there was a change in the light of the eyes. She looked as though she would smile, but she did not. At least he sprang to her. For one second she was in his arms. Then she pushed him away.

"Now go!" she cried.

The scene had thrilled the older woman at the key-

hole with many emotions. She had barely time to run hysterically away to the *corredor's* far end, the candle tottering in her hand, her face alternately burning and turning haggard, when Doroteo came suddenly out and closed the door. He was the same swift, feline Quiroz; but he was hot about the forehead. He carried with him a picture of the girl throwing herself down on a chair by the table, burying her face in her arms.

"Oh my son!" cried the shaking Doña Manuela, running unsteadily to him. "Be careful; be careful what you do. Passion is a wild thing!"

Passing her he patted her once on the cheek, lightly, delicately; with less desire to keep alive her pitiable faith in him she would have called it coldly.

"Never fear — go to bed, *Mamacita*."

He went to Fortino and awoke him. Anastasio slumbered on.

"Fortino," he said, speaking with hard pointedness, "I was mistaken about the other bridge, I went there to-night. They have completed it. Vicente could cross there and beat the enemy to the plaza if the enemy came. I am going out now to hunt the rumor down. Sleep on; you will need your strength. If I find reasons I shall send this long slumberer on a gallop to Vicente before dawn. By the new bridge an army can reach the plaza and fortify itself and an enemy not know it is there. Adios!"

"Give me a swing, then," growled Fortino, "at the chain. The scheme begins to grow on me. I know I shall win back my reputation."

Doroteo was gone and Fortino sat up long pondering with the mien of a Jove or a Saturn.

The broken Doña Manuela, full of doubts and terrors but straining her faith still, poor woman,

grasping in her lonely soul at every straw, went slowly and bent into the glazed, homeless parlor and sat down stiffly on one of the straight chairs. She seemed to have no idea of retiring. She sat there for a long time.

"He will tell me all," she sighed. "He knows the love of his mother. If anything goes wrong I fear the girl will be the cause of it. Oh yes, he always tells me everything, does Doroteo."

CHAPTER X

TO this day the trip between Chapala and Tizapan is often made between dusk and dawn in those same flat-bottomed *canoas*. To be afloat in the lake's middle on a moonless night is to have no sign of shore on any hand. Many times the waves out there rise to great heights and those frail barks are tossed about like chips. Shipwrecks and loss of life are far from unknown.

The same wind that had swirled about Quiroz in Tizapan's narrow streets was filling thirty square sails on the darkening waters. They flew over the waves like so many night-birds, silent. The west grew dark; even the highest edge of the highest cloud put out its light. The strangely freighted vessels spread out for a distance of some two miles. As they are not the easiest craft to manage it was well not to let them come too near one another. Chapala's few lights gradually disappeared; only the stars remained. There was, at nine o'clock, no shore; there were no mountains; only each little ship to itself plunging into the night, a ghostly company of white wings on every hand, and rising waves beating against pitched sides and flinging spray over man and beast. In the main the horses had become as quiet as could have been hoped, though an unusual lurch sometimes caused a scramble of hoofs and some equine expression of distress.

"Did you know there is iron on the prow of this thing?" called a soldier from the black depths of the *canoa* which Bonavidas commanded, a *canoa* loaded with men only. "What did they put iron on it for? This is the biggest and the fastest, too. If anybody should get in front of this prow, holy fathers! we would cut into him!"

Bonavidas, like some lean prowler of the night, moved always from one end of the vessel to the other, bending that bony visage of his over the water and watching the other sails. Some of his companions under the unremoved thatch at length sang low and melancholy songs in that peculiar, restrained falsetto of the Mexican peon.

The next boat, some rods to Bonavidas' right, was the little "Delirium," wherein were three soldiers, a servant of Doroteo, and eight horses. Beyond this, a full black quarter of a mile, flew the sail of the *jefe*. The *jefe*, with his invigorated mood of youth gone, sat high on the prow of his vessel looking away to the fathomless southeast. The majority of his companions had congregated at the stern with the man at the rudder. The prisoner was there too, crouching in their midst. Others lay asleep, unseen, under the thatch.

"Clarita," said the *jefe*, turning about and seeing her indistinctly, "if I would let myself think, I would come to believe you have made a criminal of me."

She was standing again at the boat's side on a coil of rope which made her high enough that she could look over into the water. He could barely make out the outline of her body; the shapely head with the *rebozo* over it was more plainly seen. Now and then the wind caught a strand of her hair and blew it about her face. She had spoken no more.

"I knew you before this, Don Rodrigo," she said, "and you were kind. You believe you are doing right — and crime is not the word."

"Gentle judge," said he, half to himself. "But I am mistaken then — misguided — wrong."

"Yes," said she with simplicity.

He whistled a little to himself, softly.

"Heigh-ho!" he replied. "Let us not talk of this. Let us talk of the first day I saw you. Why had you run away from the *meson*?"

"I was lonely," said she. "I wanted Vicente."

"And you had not seen him since you were — how old?"

"Four."

"This is a faith," he mused, "that ought to move mountains. To carry his face in your mind so long, and to go straight to the place where he was. There is something supernatural in a child."

The boat was rolling a little more and the spray came over them.

"Let me make you a bed under the thatch. You are not used to this," said he.

"Not yet," she replied. "I have been to Tizapan before, and in the night."

"Where will you go there?" he inquired anxiously. "I am sick thinking of it. You — you, in the heart of the trouble!"

"I will go to Doroteo's house. His mother is very good."

"And Doroteo?"

"No. He is not good."

"This, at least," muttered Rodrigo, "is a satisfaction."

"Why?" asked she.

He was confused at this.

"Because — because it leaves you more admiration for the rest of us poor wanderers."

"I have seen this prisoner," she said thoughtlessly, "before."

"I would n't listen to a secret from her," said the *jefe*, "if my life depended on it. Don't tell me anything, little girl, I prefer to find it out myself."

"Oh, this is nothing. I merely saw him on the shore when I was going to Ocotlan."

"When were you at Ocotlan?"

"The night of the battle. I was very glad you were whipped. But," she added quickly, as though afraid she had offended him, "I was also very glad they had not hurt you."

"You would have liked them to take me prisoner."

"Yes," said she.

"Ah, now we understand each other," he replied. "Why did you go to Ocotlan?"

"To find brother Vicente. I tried very hard, but I could not stay."

"Again. You went again! And how did you go?"

"I walked. It took all the day and into the night."

"This might be a fairy story," said he dreamily, "and you the good princess. Is there then one, one in all the world, that can keep faith? And here you are a third time going to him, and these last were after many years. And you are a fisherman's daughter from the lake where civilization lives not. Yet the greatest thing in earth shines from you."

He could see that she turned her face to him. If she had been on the point of replying she checked herself. In a silence somewhat prolonged he believed her eyes were still on him. Then she surprised him by saying suddenly:

"I have seen something not very happy in you many a time, Don Rodrigo."

He made no response. The fear that she had been rude still hung in her mind, and she found herself wishing he would speak, but he did not. They chanced to be looking toward the southeast.

"You know the island that lies out there," she said after a time, in order that the silence might be broken. "They say it is haunted. Did you not go there once, Don Rodrigo; and what was it that you found?"

"I was but just now thinking of it," said he. "I sailed there from the other end of the lake. That, too, is a matter I would rather put out of my mind, because of a thing I may have to do. I would rather speak of you, you who wander your little world over after Vicente like a lost soul. You are no smaller than the greatest wanderers nor your wanderings any less than theirs. A hundred thousand souls have been cast adrift on this same sea whereon you are alone. Oh, pitiful creation! Yet I think there was never another so pure as you."

"What is there in a little barbarian like me," she said, "that keeps you thinking of me, and seemingly full of interest, when it is only that I am lonely and go to find my brother."

"Heaven record that simple remark! and I will answer it saying, What is there in God to interest a man, when it was simply that God was lonely and came to earth to find his brother. I tell you again you carry in you the greatest thing that lives."

"You think too much of me," said she, looking away over the waves toward Tizapan.

"If I saw much of you I think it might be so indeed. I should need some angels to watch over the wrecked pieces of my heart, lest it get together again

in spite of itself. Why do I think too much of you, and why do I keep speaking of you? It is because I think we are in the same way of life, if it be that at all; and that these waves we are cutting through on this reckless project have their counterparts in something deeper. I am going on to find something too; though there is less hope of my success than of yours, seeing that I do not know what I am hunting. Hence, if facts in the scheme of the universe make tones in a harmony, by such faith as I have we are listening to the same music — and it has saddened us both alike."

There was a new throbbing in her gentle bosom. She was so pure, so true, so open to emotion. She looked at his form again, black against the sky, and at the silent sails dim about her; and the wind she had hated came and blew gently on her cheek. She thought of Vicente, of all the past. She remembered the pressure of Rodrigo's hand when he had first led her, years ago, back to the *meson*. She could not help it — her heart was very full — and a tear came to her eye and rolled in the darkness down her cheek.

"I wish that you were not his enemy," she said in a voice that made him silent. "We would be friends, the three of us."

Who can blame him if, for a moment, he felt little and guilty, and would have given some years of his life to fulfil her wish?

Meanwhile the vessel had come gradually nearer that of Bonavidas, between which and Rodrigo's sailed the "Delirium." Rodrigo came down to the flat bottom, steadied the girl's arm with his hand, and led her under the thatch, for the ship was now rolling greatly and the waves were growing too high

for her to stay where she was. He had them strike a light and light a candle under the thatch; and the best spot was chosen for her. There were many of those rude soldiers who were glad enough to lend their blankets for her bed. With several of these he made her a place to sleep and she lay down. The last thing she saw before the light was put out was the eyes of that prisoner. He was crouched in the stern between his keepers. His face looked ashen in the faint candle-light; and it came over her with a thrill that the dull reflection of the rays from his eyes was like that from the eyes of her mother that night long ago, just before Fortino had carried her away. So it was little she slept. She lay in silence, seeing nothing, hearing the wash of the waves.

In that second boat to the left there was growing some agitation. Bonavidas had a thing to annoy him.

"To the devil with that little 'Delirium'!" cried Bonavidas. "What kind of a damp-headed fool has hold of her rudder? Holloa! You adobe men! Do you want to make corpses of us? Don't you see you are getting too near? Pull away! Pull away! The waves beat in this direction. You're too near, I say!"

His voice, battling with the wind, went across the water to where the little "Delirium" was pitching fearfully. Another voice, faintly heard, came back:

"I can't manage her. She has something wrong with her rudder."

"You've *got* to manage!" cried Bonavidas. "You can't transfer to anything in this lake but to the bottom of it. Lord have mercy on that boat, boys! Steer us off to the left."

"I can't," came his steersman's reply out of the

gloom. That official was growing desperate. "The wind has changed due south and it's too high. If I turn a hair's breadth more we're over; that's the end of it."

"For God's sake!" cried Bonavidas across the water, "keep away or we're into you!"

"No. We're five rods ahead of you," was the reply.

The "Delirium's" sail could indeed be seen rapidly coming closer. It was rising and falling in frantic response to hostile wind and waves. Already the vessel was out of the track of the wind. The great square canvas occasionally flapped wing-like, then bellied with a burst of force that made the *canoe* stagger. The danger increased and the inability of management. Bonavidas and his men, yelling warnings, beheld the other boat head straight across their course. The sail loomed up like a ghost before. Under it could be heard confusion of men and horses. Bonavidas himself leaped to his rudder and there were others with him. They strained every muscle against the wooden bar to wheel round the "Delirium's" right. Their sail was dropped and the yard fell with a crash. It was too late. A great wave beat them back. The "Delirium" staggered in front. She was close at hand. Her sail was over them like a dense white mist which had suddenly come out of the night to bury them. There was a moment's suspense and the crash came. The iron-bound prow of the bigger vessel was heard grinding its way into the other's side. Her force was such that she wheeled her smaller antagonist half way round, tore a gash like a long wound in her stern, swept away her useless rudder and went on, leaving the helpless hull a wreck behind.

The thing had come so suddenly that no one was ready for it. It was a quick terror out of the midst of a good progress. The "Delirium" had answered to her name. She had suddenly gone mad. She was as wild in those few desperate seconds as her owner, but to less purpose. She floated now a doomed ship. The water rushed in at her wounds; she drifted, whirled, and beat upon the waves. Within there was a mixture of animal and human insanity. The shock had made the horses like so many demons. Packed as they were, they struggled and fought for life in the darkness. They broke halters and became a confused mass. There were four men in the vessel; they cried in frenzy. One, a soldier, was knocked among the horses and trampled a score of times by iron hoofs. Two leaped into the water. The fourth was paralyzed with fear. He stood high up on the bow as silent as death. The vessel could hold up but a moment longer. The animals, in an excess of their frantic struggle, burst more of the wrecked planks into fragments. The stern went down as suddenly as rock sinks, and the prow shot up. Its one stupefied occupant clung to it with his last despair. For a second it hung as though suspended. Then it sank, carrying him with it amidst the scream of horses. The damage was done, and the "Delirium" was no more. One horse only could be seen, by the straining eyes in Bonavidas' vessel, to come to the surface. It beat about pitifully for some minutes and sank. The man who was trampled and he who clung to the bow were not visible. The latter was Doroteo's servant who came in charge of the boat. The two others swam toward Bonavidas. They were skilful and of cool heads. They were at length, with much difficulty, rescued by ropes and drawn into the

larger vessel. That larger vessel had come off unscathed.

"Thanks to the iron," muttered Bonavidas.

This accident chilled his crew and their companions. They had witnessed the spectacle, a spectacle horrible beyond telling thus in the midst of the lake's blackness. Only one other vessel was close enough so that its occupants knew of the misfortune. About the others the night wind whistled and the waves beat as before, and no sound that was greater than that of wind and waves, came from the wreck. The other vessel was Rodrigo's. He had them bring him as near and as swiftly as possible. He heard the news then, shouted to him by Bonavidas. He said nothing at all. He sat high up on the bow again and looked steadily across the waters into the southeast.

The waves were highest at one in the morning. Before that hour he lay down in the boat's bow, directing his steersman to awake him at the first sign of dawn or at the dying of the wind. He had that rare faculty of snatching a few hours' profound sleep in the midst of excitement. After some time there was a little gray in the east, and such of the ghostly company of sails as had been hidden by the night began to appear across the waste of waters in the first of the day. Rodrigo did not need to be awakened. He was suddenly up, over the prow again, scanning the lake. Before him the long line of peaks, like an immeasurable shadow, rose out of the south. One of his soldiers, who chanced to be familiar with the lake, was called to him.

"How long before we arrive at Tizapan?"

"I should say not before seven or eight o'clock."

"Then we have made poor time," said the *jefe*.

He descended. The east was now turning golden, and day was at hand. He went in silence under the thatch on his way to the stern. The girl lay asleep with a peon's common gray blanket over her. That strange, rich, auburn hair of hers, shining already in the early light, lay flung out on the boat's bottom. Her face was beautiful but sad. It lacked its dimples and the pink flush. He could not resist the temptation to pause, and stood over her looking at the picture she made in sleep. The carrying out of the unheard-of project was near completion. He had made the bold, new stroke. He had gained much time, and hoped to surprise his enemy. Perhaps this very day would see war and blood—for him victory or defeat or death. And this girl had come into the middle of it, and every stroke he made was anguish to her. For a moment he was sickened. But the face was sufficiently full of peace.

The northern mountains had become an inseparable, sierra-like line of distant blue. Chapala, far behind and under them, was invisible. Tizapan, only a few miles away, was visible, its green marshes, its indistinguishable mass of adobe walls. Before seven o'clock the river's mouth and the miles of reeds were reached. There was many an eye strained toward the land; but the land was as free from the presence of an enemy as it was when the old prince first looked down on it. There was, from that distance, not a living being to be seen.

Bonavidas' vessel was in the lead. He sailed straight into the stream, where the waves were at first inconsiderable, then lacking. The river here was twenty yards in width. It was deep and of still appearance, though flowing swiftly. Its water was yellow with clay. It was flanked, as though by walls.

with dense green reeds among which could be caught the glimmering of the watery marsh. The river turned, making many sharp bends. So the sail came down, and the poles were taken up. Rodrigo, to be on hand for the directing of the others, anchored his vessel outside the mouth. One by one, as they arrived, they plunged into the murky flood of the little stream.

A mile in, Bonavidas arrived at dry land. He passed the huts, whose ragged inhabitants were already congregated in wonder. It was seen, too, that the fleet's approach had caused more excitement in the town than had at first been visible. The path thither was soon lined with hastening pedestrians come to see the prodigy. The greater part of the inhabitants of Tizapan, however, remained at home and looked to the barring of doors and windows.

Bonavidas arrived at the last spot possible. His boat could go no further. There lay just before him, then, one other *canoe*, deserted, sail-furled. It was the only vessel in the river not belonging to the *jefe's* fleet. Bonavidas was now in the midst of a dense field of cane that stretched narrowly between road and marsh. He cast out his cable and tied his vessel against the shore. It was speedily unloaded of its cargo of men only. The second and the third poled round the last bend, nosed the first, and tied also. Others came. They were packed in the river as tightly as the beasts were packed in them. Some of them in this narrow portion of the stream, were even too long to turn stern to shore; wherefore the difficulty of unloading was trebled.

Immediately on landing, Bonavidas and his men dashed off in search of planks for gangways. There was at that time, as indeed there still is, a place be-

low the huts on the marsh's edge where *canoas* were built and launched. There were three in construction there when the soldiers arrived. Timbers were thus more easily obtained than they had been at Chapala. Enough were discovered to make rough gangways for ten boats at once. Slowly the clumsy craft came on, one by one. The river was a thread of strange beads. The crowd, congregating at the main landing, had food for wonder, looking down as they were on cargo after cargo of saddled beasts.

The *canoas* behind that of Bonavidas were immediately attacked with vim. The planks were up and the work again began. The horses were brought out, worse for wear, stupefied or snorting, but in the main still ready for service. They became then so entranced with freedom that the herding them was no simple matter: as boys will shout and leap about after an unwonted confinement.

Half of the vessels were now either unloaded or ready to be. The *jefe* still remained a mile away at the river's mouth, trusting the landing to his lieutenant and anxiously looking out for the safety of every ship. It was at this time that a surprise came to Bonavidas. He was dashing about at the edge of the thick cane, directing and planning, when he heard a call from within the field. In that moment he chanced to be alone. He stopped, turned, and peered in among the dense growth of sweet, green stalks. He caught a glimpse of scarlet hidden some yards in. The sun blinded him and he put his hand over his eyes and looked again. There were other hands, slender, small hands, in there, holding back the cane, and there was a girl's face, eager and drawn, peering at him. He went in and was hidden from view. He came to her and recognized her.

Long since had the shrewd Bonavidas wondered about this girl. Her coming to Rodrigo's lines before the fight at Ocotlan had been more than a passing event to him. He had noted, on that occasion, every feature of her face; most of all had he marked its changing expressions. That had been a queer occurrence to Bonavidas. He had fancied some things then. When the *jefe's* remnant fled through Ocotlan, Bonavidas alone perceived her following. Many a time he had thought it strange that, with her start and her horse, she had not made the chase a more successful one for her companions. Once, later, he had bantered Rodrigo in a sepulchral way about that young tigress. Rodrigo's manner on that occasion was food for thought. In the head of this pale lieutenant there had been and were many speculations.

The two were now hidden as effectually as though shut in by walls.

"Do you know me?" whispered the girl.

"Si, I know you."

"If what I say seems to you worth it, will you act without telling the *jefe* it was I who came?"

"If it is n't absolutely necessary."

"It shall not be necessary," said she almost angrily. "He would do nothing if he knew it came from me. This I shall make clear to you. Come nearer."

He did so, and she fastened her great black eyes on him and began whispering. She caught his hand, too, after a time, and held it with a firm grip. For a quarter of an hour he did not remove his gaze from hers — because he could not.

From his companions, laboring on the river bank, Bonavidas had disappeared unnoticed and as sud-

denly as though he had gone through the earth. He was inquired for and called. He did not come.

"He has gone down the river looking after other *canoas*," said they.

The work went on and the quarter of an hour passed. Twenty vessels had arrived and eleven were unloaded. Bonavidas suddenly appeared again, coming from the field of cane. There was even an unusual pallor on his extraordinary visage. He seemed in a blank dream. He stood looking dully at the horses and the boats.

"Blood of the Cross!" muttered Bonavidas; "may there be others happier over it than she. If I ever saw hell in a woman's face—and her hand was as cold as lake water."

He climbed to one of the *canoas* that was still thatched. He stood on the roof and looked across the fields to Tizapan. There was a red spot going yonder between the stone walls and disappearing into the town.

A half hour later the last of the *canoas*, a weather-beaten, faint little thing, came slowly into the river's muddy mouth, and Rodrigo's vessel, poled, entered behind it. The thirty were at length drawn up and the line, as close as vessels could be, was complete. The last of the unloading was carried through with extreme haste.

Rodrigo's first care, when his vessel was made fast a little below the huts, was his prisoner. He had him brought to shore and guarded. His next was the safety of the girl. She would land at once, she said.

"And leave me and go to Tizapan," said he, helping her out.

"Yes," she replied, not looking at him.

"They say Vicente is not there."

"He will come," said she, "and I shall wait. Or if he does not, I can go where he is."

"You are sure Doroteo's mother is your friend?"

"Oh yes."

"At least I must send some one to take care of you."

"No, no—I do not want any one. I know the way."

"Then good-by. God bless you."

There was a little of the pink in her face. She did not lift her eyes to him. She shook hands hastily and said "Thank you." She put her *rebozo* (it was a dark gray one this time and her dress was gray) more carefully about her with that inimitably graceful movement of the Mexican woman, and went sadly away alone along the dusty road. Some of the auburn hair, escaping from the *rebozo*, glistened like gold in the sun. Thus she too, like Pepa, passed between the stone walls and entered the town in the early morning.

The unloading was at last accomplished and the *canoas* abandoned, lying there in a long, ugly line, ungainly things. But the ungainly things had done much, and a wonder went down in the annals of the lake, and among these simple folk Don Rodrigo's name lives on.

Some provisions had been brought from Chapala. More were bought at the huts. A breakfast by no means satisfactory was made; the troop was gotten together and hastily mounted, not much worse for the unusual night. As for the horses, of all the more than two hundred but three were found seriously disabled. Rodrigo made diligent inquiry among the people concerning his enemy. The spectators as a

whole made a crowd sufficiently gaunt and tattered. He learned from them only that Vicente was hourly expected.

Previous to the departure of the troop there was a conversation of much purport between the *jefe* and Bonavidas. The latter drew his chief aside.

"We are to hold the plaza, this is the scheme?" said Bonavidas.

"Yes. We have there an open space seventy-five yards square. An enemy can approach only in thin lines."

"Good. We will go the roundabout way to the plaza. We will not take this street."

"Why?" said the *jefe*, eying Bonavidas, whom he knew to be a man of reason. "There is no trail the other way. It is two miles farther and over rocks, and the enemy is not here."

"I don't want to go this way," muttered Bonavidas, with a half comic feigning of sulkiness.

"Come at it, Bonavidas; quick. What do you know?"

The lieutenant led the *jefe* further away and whispered with him for some minutes. Whatever arguments he employed, they were effective. He knew how to use his tongue, and to the using of it the peculiarities of his countenance never failed to add force. It is enough to say that, though every other point was elaborated and the next few hours mapped out clearly, he was shrewd enough to make no mention of Josefa Aranja.

When the little cavalry moved, they did not proceed by the straight way from river to plaza. They turned into the lake road to the right. They turned again out of that to the left. They cut a new path, and a difficult one, at the foothills, and came at

length to the town's opposite side, where that other street, the only other one save that whose bridge was broken, led into the plaza from the west. They had brought their cowed prisoner with them. The tiny Tizapan jail faced the plaza and was empty. Rodrigo took immediate possession of that prison and, glad to free himself for the time of all thought of his captive, put him in it. That silent person slunk into its farthest corner and was locked in.

CHAPTER XI

IT has been said there was one other *canoa* in the river when Bonavidas came into it. It belonged to a sharp-eyed Indian who sailed from Mescala for Tizapan the previous morning. The morning wind being from the east, he had drifted toward Chapala that he might pick up the west wind at night and thus arrive at his destination. Having been becalmed during the long afternoon within sight of Chapala's beach, his keen eyes had made out that loading of horses. The sight inspired him with haste. He was, when the wind came, far in advance of Rodrigo. His vessel was a swift one. He arrived at Tizapan, with news burning his tongue's end, at two o'clock in the morning. Running up the long street, the first man he met therein was Doroteo, to whom he told the news. The unheard-of deed seemed at first impossible even to the reckless Quiroz. But he knew the Indian, and, after many questions, became assured of the truth of his report. Then he suddenly burst out:

"Damnation! I could do it myself."

He stood for a second struck with wonder, turned about, broke into a silent run, and left his informant standing in the street. The latter went on through the town, and such prowlers as were up and in groups about were put in possession of that which he knew.

It was still not three o'clock, and some time before the first of dawn, when Quiroz entered the door of his own *patio*. Fortino was again asleep in the middle of it, wrapped in his blanket. Anastasio had not wakened. The light had disappeared from the parlor. The mother was shut in her bedroom with her crucifix. Quiroz went to the girl's door and knocked gently. The candle was still burning inside. She opened it and came out. He whispered to her and they entered, closed the door, and sat down on opposite sides of the candle, looking at each other. They staid thus for a full half hour, wherein they talked together constantly, usually in whispers. The course that had been begun in the case of Pepa Aranja, some years before when a new *jefe politico* came to Chapala, that had arrived at a precipice on the night after the fight at Ocotlan, came to its bad end at the cliff's bottom during that half hour. Toward the end of it she laid a still, cold finger on the hand of Quiroz and said something in a tone rather hard and unlovable. Oddly enough, that very tone put the culminating touch to her long fascination of Quiroz. When he came out she looked haggard. He shut the door and left her within.

He went to Anastasio and touched him on the shoulder. The long fisherman sat up and would have spoken. Doroteo flashed a lighted wax match into his face and put his finger on the other's lips. So, after getting up slowly and stretching his limbs — a formidable process — Anastasio followed Quiroz in silence across the *patio*. Fortino was not disturbed. The two went to the rear door of the court, opposite that which led to the street. This they opened and went through, finding themselves in a

larger, ruder, unadorned square, about which were stalls. The *mozo* was asleep in a stall that was like the others save that it was made for him instead of for a horse. At Quiroz's direction the *mozo* was not disturbed. Anastasio's horse, in a stall opposite, was, at Quiroz's direction also, led out and saddled by Quiroz himself and the fisherman. All was performed with silent speed and a stealth that fitted well Quiroz's lithe body.

"I am not any town clock," complained Anastasio. "I want to know why I do things."

The horse being saddled, Doroteo took the complainer by the shoulder and gave him full, pointed directions in that confidential tone that is a fine flattery. He told him of the fleet. He explained to him the meaning of the news of the *jefe's* coming.

"Vicente is to leave Jiquilpan this morning at dawn or earlier. You will meet him half way. Rodrigo will arrive here a full hour before Vicente unless you do miracles. That it be no more Anastasio will see. Make it less, boy, make it less. Ride like a devil. Tell him he cannot hope, in spite of all effort, to arrive here before the *jefe*. Tell him it is the opinion of Quiroz that the *jefe* will draw up in the plaza and hold that. Tell him to ride straight up the river road. There is no other. I find I was right about the other bridge. It is down, and the one we crossed is the only one. And this is the only approach. The street is narrow and they will have us at a disadvantage; therefore a heavy swift charge is the only stratagem. Tell him to gallop straight into the plaza and lay to it. Tell him that Fortino, the girl, and Quiroz will lie in hiding till he come, but our liberty is worth not one *centavo* after nine o'clock. If I dis-

cover there is some other stand made than that in the plaza I shall send my *moso* out to meet him and give him full knowledge of the ground. If the enemy be in the plaza Fortino and I shall be on the look-out for Vicenté. We shall be mounted here at the *patio* door. Tell him we shall ride out and join his van as he comes, and the dash at them shall be as strong as horses can make it. Tell him the Indian claimed there are one thousand horse. This is a lie. He says, too, there were thirty sails. Tell Vicente Quiroz figures that only the Almighty could put more than two hundred horses and two hundred men in thirty *canoas*. Tell him, then, they will have the advantage of position but we can overwhelm them with numbers, and that, above all else — and I charge it on you, you long patriot, not to omit this — if I send no word that they are not drawn up in the plaza," — and here it was as well that, for the darkness, Anastasio could not see the infernal gleam of Quiroz's eyes as he finished, "then the end depends on the momentum of the charge."

A feeling of exhilaration came into the fisherman. He sighed a long, preliminary sigh. He swung his interminable leg across the saddle and spurred his steed. Doroteo went before him across the rear court to another door still farther to the rear. This door was a full block away from the front street. It, too, opened on a street, — a narrow, dirty thread of a street, — which, to the right, led into the quarter of stench whereof Anastasio had spoken, and to the left gave entrance, half a block away, into that thoroughfare already mentioned as a continuation of the little stretch of fifteen yards on the south side of Quiroz's house, the fifteen yards

between the only two bends in the way from river to plaza.

"Now ride!" cried Quiroz, smotheredly, as the horseman made his exit through the door.

Anastasio did so. He turned to the left into the thread of a street. He came to the continuation of the fifteen yard stretch, and turned to the left again into that. It was still dark, and this street was empty. He rode past the opening of the last eighty yard course to the plaza on his right, past the south side of Doña Manuela's unhappy home on his left (from which side looked forth Pepa's barred window with a little candle-light shining through the chinks), turned to the left a third time, and was in the straight way to the river landing. He had thus made almost a complete circuit of the house to reach this course. He went by the shut *patio* door and its high white wall at a gallop. He put spurs into his animal, and was out of the town and into the course between stone fences. He came thus to the lake-encircling road and wheeled into it to the right. And some of the people at the cluster of huts, aroused long since by the Indian messenger with the news, beheld, at some time before dawn on that early fall morning, a shadowy, lengthy horseman flying away toward Jiquilpan.

There was a blacksmith's shop across the alley opposite that rear door of the stable courtyard. Doroteo stepped to that shop after the disappearance of Anastasio, and tried the smoky wooden door that led into it. The door was weak, and, apparently, the place was not occupied at night. Doroteo stepped back into the stable courtyard of his own domains, and shut and barred the entrance. He came silently to the rear door of the dwelling's *patio*

and entered that, closing it likewise. Fortino was still asleep. The girl's door was still closed, and there was no sign of his mother. The wind was fallen much. The breath of early morning stirred the trees in the clean court, whose silence was unbroken.

Quiroz kneeled by the great man wrapped in the blanket on the bricks, and shook him violently. Fortino awoke with a loud grunt.

"Pretty dog you are," said Quiroz, affably and softly. "Oh, a good old dog. Dreaming, as a slender young girl dreams, he was, over her lover, while wonders go on and the enemy comes."

Fortino rolled heavily, and with excitement, into a sitting posture.

"Is the brute on hand!" roared he, with a roar that Doroteo smothered.

"The brute is on hand, and Fortino will retrieve his reputation. Awake out of these girlish dreams, graceful gazelle."

"Where is Anastasio," growled Fortino, snorting like some awakened bull and staring about. "And come at the news. If I fail again on this day — no, if Heaven is still alive and breathing I shall not fail."

"Anastasio has gone. He is more wakeful, more alert. I have received word from a *mozo* whom I once employed, and who lives in Tuxcueco (which, as you know, is on this same southern shore to the west), that Rodrigo is coming. This same *mozo* came knocking at the door not half an hour ago, having ridden nearly all of the night from his home in a gallop. Don Rodrigo and something less than one thousand cavalry are on the road. They left Tuxcueco after midnight. They do not gallop. They keep their horses fresh. They will arrive

here before the middle of this sweet morning, do you hear? Fortino, dreamer that you are, poet in soul who conceives great deeds, Fortino, your day of action is at hand."

The other was up, with his form swelling.

"Give me a way that is honest and sure and proves me a man of faith. What is it? Is it the chain? Oh, Son of Mary! my muscles have this night dreamt of the chain!"

"It is the chain," said Quiroz, softly, laying four slender fingers on Fortino's breast. "And give thanks for your strength. There is not one other giant in the whole lake region that has muscle enough. Anastasio has this moment ridden off at a gallop toward Jiquilpan with the news for Vicente. He will meet our forces in the middle of the distance. He carries my map of the way and my plans. From the estimate of the messenger who tells me the start and the speed of the *jefe*, and from my own estimates, Vicente can easily reach Tizapan an hour before him. For this I have sent Anastasio, that he may come full speed. The messenger, too, has seen the map of the town that Rodrigo is using. He says it is Rodrigo's plan not to attempt the perilous and almost impossible way round the foothills; for he has received no word of Vicente's approach and believes himself at least a day ahead of us. He knows, too, of the broken bridge of which I have told you. But he does not know that it has been replaced. He therefore believes that our forces cannot reach the plaza save by this same street from the river. He intends, then, to come up this street. He intends, if the way be clear, to advance and fortify himself in the plaza's middle. But listen —"

Quiroz came very near, keeping his fingers on the other's breast. The perspiration was beginning to come out on the giant's face.

"Rodrigo will learn, before he arrives, that his enemy is ahead of him. My map to Vicente marks out the way round, east of the town, to the new bridge. Besides, Anastasio and others of our forces know the circuit perfectly. It is through orchards; there are no roads; but it is easy. Vicente will never enter the river road. He will turn out of the lake road before reaching this one. He will come into the plaza by the street toward the southern mountains, which street leads over the new bridge which Rodrigo believes to be wanting. Do you begin, you slender dreamer, to have visions of the outcome? I figure Rodrigo will arrive something before nine. He will learn at the river, if not sooner, that we hold the plaza. He is a bold and quick fighter. He will not pause. Vicente and his forces will be drawn up in the central square in compact, broad lines. He will have every gun aimed at the narrow throat of the street. The advantage will be ours. Rodrigo will sweep up this street which you call a tunnel; and a tunnel it is, and it shall be a tunnel leading to the glory of Fortino. Mark me; no enemy can see round a corner. My house's wall is at your disposal, and there is a garden's wall opposite. My boy, do you follow?"

That buried chuckle that seemed at times to boil within the fisherman's body began to be audible. It rumbled and shook him. It grew heavier and louder, and his folds of flesh were agitated by it.

"Come," said Quiroz, and, cat-like, went away to the street door. He paused and went to the

stables, and returned with a strong rope. Then he went out.

He was followed by Fortino, who, from the house to the plaza, and from the plaza back to the house, never ceased to chuckle. The news of the approaching fleet was now spreading, and there were new groups on the street hurrying hither and thither or going to the river. They were not, however, so numerous as Quiroz had feared. For his plans the leading of this fisherman through the streets had some peril in it and he knew it. He held Fortino's arm. He hurried him with all speed, and passed those who passed him in fear of the news being spoken. This was the one narrow edge whereon his course went. Once over this, and the giant still blinded by his lies, he believed he could manage the rest. There were other things that blinded Fortino, — his eagerness, his wounded vanity about to be satisfied, his subterranean joy. It is doubtful that cannon could have taken his mind from his laborious cogitations as he went unseeing, unhearing, into the central square.

The square was still dark and nearly empty. They came to the coil of chain, and Fortino stooped and felt it caressingly. He ran the rope round its lower coils. Then he knelt with his back to it, and put his hands behind him, under the chain. Quiroz assisted. The rest of the rope was passed over Fortino's head, placed across his broad breast, and knotted again at the chain, after the manner of the ropes of *cargadores* to this day. The giant swayed a little forward. The mass came up slowly. Quiroz's hands steadied it, and the lifter, holding his breath, was on his feet with the iron coming up, up. He was at length straight and the burden secure.

"She weighs," muttered Fortino, "some hundred and fifty *kilos*."

Even so great a weight is not really formidable to a very strong Mexican. But as Fortino went ponderously through the darkness his tread on the earth was like the tread of a monster. On the return there was less danger of his hearing the news, for he was even more preoccupied; yet Quiroz, close at his side, scarcely breathed for anxiety. Certain groups and hastening couples discussed the unheard-of fleet. Quiroz broke in with loud remarks to his companion and drowned the voices. Some came near enough to note the burdened man. But the darkness permitted none to recognize the nature of the burden, and a heavily laden *cargador*, even so early in the morning, was not a sight worthy of much comment when there were other greater wonders at hand. When at length the two arrived at the centre of the fifteen-yard stretch between the two angles of the street, and at a point near Pepa's window, and some seven yards from the first corner, the carrier paused, knelt slowly down, and deposited the chain on the ground close against the wall of Quiroz's house.

"Nobody will steal that," said he, huskily, mopping his brow. "They could take the house first."

There were still little beams of light coming through the chinks of Pepa's window. The two speedily turned the corner and entered the *patio* door. Quiroz not only locked it, but put its only key in his pocket. He led the fisherman into the larger court of the stables, across that and into the little lane into which Anastasio had ridden. As he did so the first of the dawn was in the sky.

"Burst in that door," said he, pointing to the smithy.

Fortino did it with evident pleasure. It was a matter of no difficulty to his shoulder. They struck a light within. Fortino seized anvil and hammers; Quiroz loaded himself with bars of iron. Thus burdened they retired across the lane and re-entered the stable court, the door of which Quiroz locked, pocketing that key also. In the court's middle the stolen property was deposited. A portable *brasero* and charcoal were brought from the kitchen. The maid-servants sleeping in the next room were not awakened by Doroteo's silent tread.

"It'll be some trouble heating it with that," said Fortino. "Why couldn't I have done it in the smithy?"

"This is better, boy," said Quiroz, whispering. "Secrecy — secrecy is the word. You can heat it by hard blowing of the fire. There are *ocote*, matches, and a *soplador*. Now — have you it clear in your head what you need?"

"Clear as glory, and here it is."

Fortino then laid out his plans to Quiroz with as much fervor and as tingling a pleasure as ever would-be poet displayed in reading his verse to his friend. Quiroz approved.

"Make the hook first," said he. "That must be on the opposite side in the wall of the garden of a good neighbor of mine. The wall must be scaled by a ladder, which deed you must do before it is well day, that you may attract less attention. At it, oh my aspiring soul! Glory shall be yours!"

And the giant went to work with a force and a haste that made his flesh only some degrees less hot than his furnace.

Before the lighting of the fire Quiroz went across the court to his sleeping *mozo* and awoke him.

"Come," said he.

The *mozo* followed him into the *patio*, whereupon Doroteo shut and locked that door also, and pocketed his third key.

"Stay here in the *corredor* a little," said Quiroz; "I shall presently need you."

So Fortino was left alone with his chuckling and his labors of glory.

Quiroz was again with the girl. It was a half hour after this, and there was now a very little light in the street, that Pepa, let out by Quiroz, who locked the door again after her, went away toward the river. While Doroteo was absent she had changed her dress, and he saw, as she came out in the dawn, that it was red.

CHAPTER XII.

TO the man in whom there is something of the dreamer it seems there is also likely to be certain bitter compensations for the pleasure of his dreams. Just so much as he is capable of rising into the mood of a rarefied medium, just so much is he likely to be wont to sink into moods of doubt and darkness. For a time the doubt becomes that kind of sickness of spirit which, like the morbidness of the sleepless, sees health nowhere, and can only believe in health by a kind of unimpressive hearsay. This is the price of the dreamer's exaltation. What it was that sunk Vicente into a bad mood when he left Jiquilpan, he himself did not know. There had come into his mind at times some shadow of sorrow concerning the girl, — he would not have called it doubt. He was given, too, to a deep and comprehensive speculation always, which may have been often too far beyond the immediate task in hand. Otherwise he might have doubted Quiroz, for he knew something of Quiroz. Yet, thought he, to what cause could an adventurer better cling than this? The very nature of his progress and his project seemed to him certain to hold Quiroz. Then, too, it is hard for a man of Vicente's nature to realize perfidy of the blackest kind till he sees it proved. Hence, wherein he was weakest was wherein the church and its training had given him some little of the nature of the

churchly philosopher who loses sight, in bigger schemes, of one small criminal in his way.

The mounting of his troops had been pushed steadily on. He now had horses for a large majority, — a number approaching fourteen hundred. As his force marched out of Jiquilpan shortly before dawn, this cavalry rode in advance of the smaller infantry. The sense of coming danger was heavy on Vicente as they went. He was in the lead — silent. Somehow his thoughts would not mount over this day and go on to victory. They wandered rather in the past and stopped short this side of Tizapan.

"And he set cherubim and a flaming sword that turneth every way," muttered he. "Ay, the strong man will come — before the century ends. But what are you, with your old Aztec blood, that you should pass those cherubim and that sword?"

He became restless with that sense of danger over him, and eager to dash into it and have it done. The sun came up, and the day over which his thoughts could not leap was begun. It was scarcely an hour later that Anastasio's thin figure and flying horse burst with ungainly speed on his view. The message was delivered and communicated to the troops. They had been advancing some hours at a brisk gait. They were somewhat stunned by the news of that bold move of Rodrigo's, but when they knew Doro-teo's estimate of the *jefe's* numbers they shouted and laughed over it, and were eager to be on. Vicente only smiled when he heard of the fleet. He knew now that the greatest speed might be all too slow. He abandoned the infantry, with the command that it should follow as rapidly as possible. He ordered the cavalry forward with such speed as was at all compatible with the distance.

The line galloped on, grinding the trail into dust that swirled in clouds behind. An hour, and there was many a horse in a lather, but the beat of the gallop ceased not. Vicente himself, at the front with Anastasio, set the pace. Anastasio's horse, because of its long journey hither, began to give out. It could not stand this continued charge. Anastasio fell behind. That lank rider found himself at length the last of the line. Francisco, in a brotherly mood, conceived with extreme suddenness and acted upon with unwonted alacrity, lagged likewise, using great and highly unselfish energy to assist his comrade on with his steed. A terrible passion fell on Anastasio, a thing exceeding rare to that languid fisherman. Whereas for years previous he had not felt anger, it was as though the years heaped it all now within him. Hence, raging over the prospect of dropping far behind and seeing none of the fight (a prospect by no means so annoying to Francisco), he beat his animal with clattering vigor, employing for this purpose arms, feet, knees, spurs, even the whole of his legs. Finally, when the horse would, in spite of all torments, stop still for a siesta in the road's middle, Anastasio got off and threw rocks at it. Francisco's excessive sympathy at this pass was worthy of a more appreciative object. He paused likewise, industriously absorbed in his condolence. He was so furiously berated by Anastasio for this misplaced zeal, that he at length reluctantly pursued the flying troops. Hence it was that the deserted philosopher entered Tizapan a half hour after the last of the cavalry had disappeared in the narrow street.

By half-past eight, such was the speed of the forced gallop, the troop was within less than two leagues from the town. It was here that another messenger

met it. He was Doroteo's *mozo*, riding at a hard gallop also. The line was not halted; the messenger merely fell in with it. He handed a paper to Vicente, who read it as he rode. It was this:

They are drawn up in the plaza, watching the streets. They are a little over two hundred, all mounted. They believe you are near and that they have no time to fortify. Come straight up the river street, which is open. We will join you. Victory is ours. But it depends on the vigor of the charge, for their position is bad for us. Hence, ride hard.

QUIROZ.

The news was passed back and the order for a lessening of speed. The last two leagues were covered on a brisk trot only, that the horses might be a little fresher. The town was then suddenly at hand. Before entering it a halt was ordered. The leader believed it unnecessary to attack his enemy with his entire force, a force whose numbers would have produced a congestion in the street and plaza embarrassing if not fatal. He therefore chose less than a third of his cavalry to accompany him in the first charge. He formed them five abreast; commanded the reserve to proceed to the town and remain in waiting in the street; and gave the word to advance.

They came to the river road that cuts the lake road at right angles. Vicente wheeled into it, seeing the mud huts, the marsh, the rising ducks, the glistening mirror of the lake, and thirty empty *canoas* lifting slim masts from the river. The cavalry beat up between the stone walls to the town. The order was given that the charge in full gallop, boldly, should be entered on at once when the first of the low adobe houses that lined the street should be reached. A last black doubt swept, then, over Vicente. He re-

membered afterward that even as they struck the gallop there came down over him some sense of the rottenness of the whole human fabric. He was filled with a calm ferocity after that. He felt like a spirit leaping into fire. He found himself saying again, as they began the last mad charge through the shaft:

“And he set cherubim and a flaming sword —”

The town had till then lain in comparative silence. It had been, as it were, hugging itself in a chill anticipation. The streets were long since deserted. There was indeed a band of more than two hundred horsemen drawn up in the plaza, with weapons aimed at the river way. The only other bridge, that had led into the plaza from the other direction, was as lacking as it had been when Doroteo saw the place of it in the night. By the third street, from the west, Rodrigo had come. As he rode into the plaza Bonavidas had been unable longer to keep back the source of his knowledge. Rodrigo turned white as he listened. Remorse fell on him as though he had been a criminal. But he was there. His men were there. The enemy was at hand.

There was silence without the house of Quiroz. The iron chain was still in the street, though there had been, earlier, a change in the position of it. The swirls of extraordinary colors shone as gaudily on the walls as though they expressed some type of self-assurance and vanity. The colors had been the first in the street to come out of the obscurity of the night. The earliest dawn had had its first, silent sport with the green and the red. Not long after that earliest dawn, and when the street was still dimly and grayly lit, Quiroz and the giant had come stealthily out of the *patio* door, closed it, and rounded the corner into the fifteen-yard stretch where the chain

was still coiled against the wall. They crossed the street here to its opposite side. There was then (and in some parts of the same town there are still similar ones) a small fruit orchard of pomegranates, *aguacates*, oranges, etc., mingled with a little coffee. It was walled in on two sides by houses, and on the side next the street by a thick adobe wall as high as the houses themselves and, like them, capped with tiles. Over the tiles' tops were seen the tops of trees stirring a little with the morning's breath. The great Fortino bore a ladder, and there were iron and instruments in the hands of Quiroz. This little turn of the street was deserted. Its dust and stones seemed to be asleep in the dim gray.

The ladder was put against the garden wall opposite the house, and the two climbed up to the tiles and pulled it after them. They then lowered it within and descended. The trees cast a deep shade. The scent of orange blossoms was strong, and the slick leaves of coffee, even in the gloom, had begun to shine. There was no sound save that of the men themselves or the occasional falling of a purple alligator pear from some unseen height. Then the sweat, which with him was ever a mental product, came out on the ox-like Fortino and he seized the tools and began digging in the adobe wall at a height a little lower than a man's shoulder. Quiroz stood over him urging him on in suave whispers.

"They will know," said Quiroz, "that Fortino, the slender, conceived it, executed it, and wears his glory as he wears his grace. Let other heroes be like this. There will be no strutting out of Fortino. It is to keep faith, to redeem pledges, to establish again that repute that the sensitive mind felt gone. Ah, these are the world's noblemen! At it, my

boy! — you are a foot and a half through. I should say you are more than half the distance. This wall is never a nun's finger thicker than a *vara*. God! this place might be a nunnery and we getting into it, an idea sufficiently full of poetry if I had time to carry it out."

"Give me only ten minutes," growled the giant, hoarsely.

Three quarters of an hour after entering, the two and the ladder were again in the street, which had grown lighter. They passed some excited men and women who came a moment too late to see from whence they had taken that means of ascent which Fortino again bore on his shoulder. They rounded the corner to the *patio* door and went in, at which moment the huge one burst into a private and fearful laugh that was a kind of monstrous exultation. And from the garden wall, where they had worked, protruded some inches into the street a heavy iron hook capable of withstanding a mighty strain, for it was but the curved end of a bar that ran three feet through the solid adobe and was clamped on the far side.

In the house Doña Manuela was again to be seen, and still in the light blue. Doña Manuela's hair, turning gray, was arranged but loosely, and a curl, grayer than the rest, fell down on her cheek.

"Ah, Doroteo!" cried she, running out to the *corredor* as the men came in. "I was driven very unhappy, for you and the girl were gone! Where were you? And be very careful, my son, lest you take some false step that you would regret till the day of your death, which Mary grant it may be here in your bed and peaceful."

"I am more careful than St. John when he wrote

books and recorded visions, *Mamacita*." He led Fortino to the rear *patio*, let him through, and whispered: "At it again, thou patriotic heart, and let purgatory's flames be slower!"

"This is true," said the anxious lady as he returned to her; "wild and uncareful ways were ever unnatural to you, Doroteo. But I am sometimes afraid you may be led astray. She is really a quiet girl, Doroteo? Is she a good girl, such as your old mother would want you to keep company with?"

She passed her hand over his face, looked up at him, eagerly, and ran her fingers under his sombrero and through his hair.

"I have never seen anything about her that any Castilian or Moorish traditions could blush at," said he. "She will be coming back, and as modest as white violets, I'll swear by any kind of an image."

An hour later, during which hour there had been hammering in the rear court, the street door, which Doroteo had not again locked, was opened and Pepa came in. She carried a set expression of the features during those hours, and a deep and strange gaze was in her eyes, a gaze that frightened Doña Manuela, true-hearted Doña Manuela, who, though all she thought was mistaken, though she clung only to false old beliefs concerning that handsome son than whom there could have been no greater stranger to her on the sad face of the earth, still held the great good, the glory that will shine because it is faith when the earth is dead. She had made many little fluttering plans about going to Pepa, when Pepa should come in, and putting her arm about her and having a good, satisfying talk with the girl. But when she saw Pepa, the fluttering changed and she could not approach her.

Doroteo locked the *patio* door after the girl. She said nothing to him of her success, but he knew it from her face.

"Is it ready?" asked she, her eye burning, but with a tone not soft or satisfied, and on hearing which Doña Manuela went away slowly under the *corredor*.

"The garden, yes — a minute more and the other likewise. The red again! Passion of God! — I love you in red! I made it a rule when I was still a boy that I would never play any color but the red. There must be a red fire in my very soul, else I am born near hell and hear the crackle of the blaze. I am like a bull, that the color maddens me. I never see it that something in me does not stir as though it would leap. I can shut my eyes any time in the night and see a red stream, like blood, flowing hot through my brain. Ideas, people, deeds, associate themselves to me with colors, and if the color is red, the idea, the person, the deed is mine or I will die getting it. Pepa, if I shut my eyes and think of you — *Muerte de Dios!* there was never a color so deep, so maddening as that. It is as though my soul were suddenly a mass of flame. You have dressed thus for me on the great day!"

He went away to the door of the rear court. She had not smiled at him, and when he turned, having said she had dressed in red for him, there was a high scorn on her face. He came back with Fortino, who was absorbed in his deed to as great an extent as the mass of his body was great. Fortino carried more tools and more iron, and there were still noises in him, and when he passed Pepa he emitted heat like the lime-kiln to which Anastasio had compared him. He went with Doroteo to Pepa's room and the two

entered it, she following. Doña Manuela, bewildered and bent at the far end of the *corredor*, scared at the tools and the iron, came slowly up, trembling and murmuring:

“Oh Doroteo! Oh Doroteo!”

The room Pepa had occupied was the corner room; that is to say, its east side was upon that part of the street which was the straight stretch to the river, its south side was on the fifteen-yard stretch between the two angles. There were two windows in it, one in each of the two sides named. The east window therefore, looked out on the straight way over which cavalry would pass before reaching the first corner. That window was, indeed, not far from the *patio* door, which led out into that way and faced in the same direction. The south window gave view across the street to the garden from whose wall protruded the iron hook. Mention has been made of the bars that protected these windows. The feature is a common one—nearly a universal one—in Mexico to-day. From the high top to the low bottom near the floor, there extended over the outer sides of these two apertures iron bars a few inches apart, like the bars of a jail. These were bent at the ends to right angles, and the ends were inserted deep in the outer adobes surrounding the windows and fastened securely; so that the plane of the bars was a few inches beyond the plane of the wall. On this account one could stand on the broad sill and, looking up and down the street, see the whole of it, which view would have been impossible had the bars been flush with the wall. This, too, is the common arrangement to-day.

The hook in the garden adobes was opposite a spot corresponding to one nearly in the southwest

corner of the room, to the right of the south window as one looked out, and some seven yards from the street's angle, for the apartment was large. To this corner went the giant in his labors of glory. Here, too, he assaulted the plastering (tinted blue and with lines and stencil-figures of red and brown) and came to the adobe and assaulted that, the drops running from his face, his throat giving out grunts. Doroteo and the girl stood silently behind him and Doña Manuela crept to the door. Then she cried out:

"Oh my son! This will make an ill appearance. Doroteo! Doroteo! what is it? What terrible thing are you going to do? I have felt it all night that you would do something that you would regret. What is the meaning of this awful hole?"

It was at this moment that there came a knocking on the iron knocker of the *patio* door. She did not heed it, perhaps did not hear it. Pepa was as still as a mute, watching the tools in Fortino's hands. It would have taken a many times more ominous knocking than that to wake Fortino from the internal frenzy of his dream. For indeed the knocking was a little timid. Doroteo, who had stood near the east window as though guarding it, gave no appearance of perceiving the knock.

"The truth is, mother," said he, "that my enemies are coming up this street to sack the town. Fortino, this patriot here, is going to stretch the big chain across for a little impediment. The idea is masterful and all Fortino's."

"*Si*, let them come—let them come!" muttered Fortino from the corner.

"Oh Doroteo!" cried the old lady, throwing herself upon him. "I beseech you to leave the war alone!—Come, come—your life shall be quieter!"

There was a second knocking on the iron knocker at the door, louder but still unheeded.

"You would make a coward of me, mother," asked he blandly, "when the enemy comes to sack the town and carry you off?"

"No," she answered with sadness, "they would n't want a poor old soul like me." She sank into a painful revery, still clinging to him, during which there was a third knocking, louder and still more prolonged. "Is it necessary to the war, all this, and the terrible hole?" asked she. "Doroteo, I wanted you to follow the natural bent of your nature and — Oh Holy Mary! is that hook out there in Don Anacleto's garden wall for the chain? Why Doroteo! if some of the horses trip on it the riders will be killed!"

The fourth knocking, irregular, like that of one in great haste and growing fearful. Doroteo moved to the window and looked out, saying:

"Not likely, *Mamacita*. Ah, it is the auburn-haired one. How in the name of miracles did that little bird flutter here?"

He and Pepa exchanged glances, and Pepa went out, followed quickly by Doña Manuela.

"Auburn hair, did he say?" murmured the latter. Whose? — was it hair he said? Ah! Clarita! Clarita! Oh little lady — how did you come — and you had n't forgotten me!"

"I came in one of the boats," said Clarita, admitted by Pepa. She was tired and wretched. She had grown very much afraid at the door, thinking no one would come to let her in, being alone in the town without friends, and all the danger and the fear of battles, and the fear for him accompanying her. "I came because I — I wanted to come. This

is all," said she, taking off the gray *rebozo*, whereat the auburn hair shone.

"But you have come to a terrible place," groaned Doña Manuela. "Come away; I will give you something to eat."

"Only a little coffee, Doña Manuela. Pepa, Pepa! I did not know you were here. Then Vicente, too, has come? Pepa, I think you are not well; you do not look well. There is Doroteo in the room, too — oh tell me, has Vicente come!"

Doroteo had stepped to the room door and closed and locked it.

"He has not come," said Pepa, "but he is coming in an hour."

It was like a soft spring day in the midst of winter, this coming of the gentle one. She walked across the *patio*, clothed in her faithfulness and her innocence, and none of the crime came near her. She ate a little in the kitchen, wept over and fondled by Doña Manuela, whose whole heart and all its frozen fears and longings melted with a rush before Clarita; to all of which Clarita smiled a little and had the dimples out, and was eager, in her sadness, for the hour to pass. Meanwhile Pepa stood just outside the door of the room wherein Fortino was at work, and kept her gaze, a hard one, on the kitchen, and guarded the secret. Afterward she went to the kitchen door and said abruptly:

"Did the *jefe* say how he would come to the plaza?"

"No," said Clarita, "I did n't talk to him about that."

Pepa went back to the door of her own room relieved. Then Clarita's arrival was of less moment than she had thought probable. Clarita, too, would

suppose Rodrigo's course to be up this street. Yet it were best to keep her away from Fortino till the work should be done. Quiroz came and spoke a moment to Pepa, and returned and again closed the door.

"Do you know who has come?" he was now saying to the sweating fisherman, kneeling down and laying a hand on the other's shoulder as he worked. "Clarita. She came by one of my own *canoas* from Chapala. She has seen Vicente, and she, soul of honesty, is our witness that Vicente has arrived. She came from the plaza and he has sent her here for safety. Have you kept your ears alert, my mountainous one—have you listened for the tramp of horses?"

"I have listened and there has been no horse pass by this street," said Fortino, coming to the outer air at last and completing the hole with a grunt of satisfaction.

"And why? Because the scheme goes on as Quiroz said. Vicente has entered the town by the other bridge. At this moment his spurs are clinking in the plaza. Do you know, old hungerer for deeds, I long since sent my *mozo* to lie in wait for Rodrigo at the lake road from Tuxcueco and (for my *mozo* is unknown to that doomed *jefe*) to tell him of Vicente's readiness. Hence Rodrigo is no such fool as not to be in full gallop when the pretty play is made. Come—out; and up with the chain."

"No," said Fortino.

"What is it now!"

"I shall out and prepare, *si señor*," said Fortino. "But the chain comes not up till the horses are on it. Ha! ha! Give my strong arm one good last chance!"

"Fortino, Fortino, my boy, can you be sure of it thus? It would take strength like that of a bull and a speed straight out of Heaven!"

"Fah!" thundered Fortino, going to the door. "I shall not risk their seeing it and pulling up. Ha! ha! Ha! ha!"

Laughing wildly he went out across the *patio* and into the street. He turned the corner and came to the hole he had made through the gaudy wall. He lifted an end of the coil that lay there and passed it through the aperture to Quiroz.

"What are you doing?" cried a last passer-by, hurrying away to safety.

"It is not any of your damned business!" cried Fortino, and returned to the *patio*, and into the room, still laughing.

So they clamped that chain end immovably inside the room with strong iron, which, before it could break through, must tear out a good fourth of the wall; and it may be as well to remind the reader again that the adobe walls of a good house are of great thickness and solidity.

It was approaching nine o'clock when the fisherman again went out on to the street, his form swelling and his eyes seeing nothing. The houses might have been pearl, so full of an exaltation was he, a righteous, faithful exaltation, a desire to do good, strong deeds in an honest cause — ay, the streets might have been paved with gold.

Doroteo locked the *patio* door after him and went and locked also the door of the room wherein he had worked. So that chosen apartment was left empty with its clamps of iron and its chain end and its hole in the wall. Quiroz handled the two heavy keys for one hesitating second. Each was monstrous, that of

the room especially so, being a foot in length and of heavy metal. There were reasons why Quiroz deemed it best that his person should not be encumbered by such a weight of iron. It was in that second that Pepa went out by the rear door that led into the second court. She proceeded thence into the alley and streets Anastasio had traversed. Quiroz cast a glance at the kitchen. His mother was still there with Clarita, but she would be hovering over him in a minute more.

He slipped into the glassy and unhome-like parlor and hid the two keys amidst the artificial fruit, the cracked crystal *chirimoya*, the slices of melon, the china mango — buried them in that uninviting heap of painted lusciousness. Then he came stealthily out and, as silently as the girl had gone, went through the back court and into the alley by the smithy. He did not lock those two rear doors but closed them, leaving a quicker retreat if it should be needed. At the smithy he turned to the left in the lane and came, after a few yards, to that prolongation of the fifteen-yard stretch by which Anastasio had entered the latter when he rode past the house and away. Quiroz, just before coming to the first of the fifteen yards, found Pepa, like a red statue, standing at the corner of the street that led into the plaza. She was waiting there, hid from the view of any one in the plaza itself, but being so near the corner that merely a step would be sufficient to bring the gleam of a red dress to the eyes of those waiting. Quiroz passed her, singing softly:

“She staked her love upon the red — ”

He passed by the opening of the street that led into the plaza and, looking thither, saw cavalry stand-

ing. He went on and entered the fifteen-yard stretch, in the middle of which was Fortino. Fortino's laughter had sunk into the subterranean chuckle. The chain of massive links was stretched across the road, but lying on the ground. It was almost twice as long as was necessary. So he (standing against the garden wall and by the hook) held it near its middle, the useless portion being coiled at the wall's foot. But even so much of that unbreakable line of iron was of great weight, and the hook was nearly as high as his shoulder.

"Can you do it?" said Quiroz.

"*Si, lo haré*," was the untroubled response.

The street was so narrow that the distance of seven yards to the first corner would prevent Fortino's being seen by the approachers till they were near rounding the turn. Fortino was cogitating on this point.

"*Si*—but they must be nearer than that—nearer than that," muttered he.

"No!" cried Quiroz with passion. "In the name of all that is holy, up with it before they make the turn!"

"Not so!" grunted the preoccupied Fortino.

"I tell you yes," whispered Doroteo. "At least leave it to me. Give your attention, man, to the chain. I will tell you when to swing it up. Wait not too long!"

"*Vamos a ver*," responded Fortino.

When Quiroz had left the house he had for a moment forgotten the properties of a mother's eyes and ears. Doña Manuela, in the kitchen, had seen his stealthy entrance into the parlor and had heard the slight rattle of the crystal fruit. When he went out, she ran after him, calling him:

"I want you with me, Doroteo!"

But he had not heard and was gone. She came back and, Clarita having drunk her coffee, Doña Manuela, followed by the girl (who was beginning to be frightened by the lady's manner), ran to the parlor and, knocking the crystal *chirimoya* to the glazed brick floor where it burst into a score of pieces, discovered the keys.

"Clarita!" cried she, "they are leading him into a secrecy that is as unnatural to him as it is painful to his mother. Come, I feel that I must open the door of the room."

And she went to it, the sky blue dress fluttering. In her fulness of heart and desire to talk of the nature of Doroteo, she had not at all explained to Clarita the matter of the chain. She had chattered on as though the other knew of it, and Clarita was by now quite bewildered. The door was unlocked and the two went in, and the old lady with fear and trembling pointed at the end of the chain clamped against the wall in the corner.

"These are the awful things he is led into. Oh, Clarita, my little friend! my little friend!"

Clarita stared at it. Then she came a step nearer the south window and looked out and saw Fortino, the huge, the ugly, standing against the opposite wall, his loose white trousers flapping in a little breeze, his blue sash brilliant, his head bare, his eyes staring in a trance at the corner, the chain in his hand. Quiroz was near him. The street was as silent as though the town were dead. The sun came into it and was yellow on the stones, the earth, and the adobes; the breath from the lake lifted the dust aimlessly and swirled it about in little funnels. She was horrified. She felt all the blood in her veins as though it stood suddenly still.

"What are they going to do, Doña Manuela?" asked she, whispering it.

"Why, they say their enemy is coming and they will stop him," cried the other. "Oh! I cannot look — yet, yet — I will have to! I cannot — yet I cannot refrain. Nay, nay, I will not look!"

Clarita's face turned suddenly gray. She had been too young, too sincere and innocent, to dream of it before — but had she had time to think she would now have known the great, new thing that was born in her heart. Don Rodrigo and his men were to plunge into that trap. She went to the east window, the window that gave view toward the river, and stepped up on its ledge and looked down. Far away there were horses galloping here at a fearful speed. She was sick and clung to the iron. "At least," said she, "it will save my brother. Oh Vicente! Vicente! the chain will save you!" So she stood, fascinated, unable to move, and prayed to Mother Mary, while Doña Manuela, seeing by the girl's face that the moment was come, crouched in the room and covered her ears and her eyes with her hands.

The galloping troop came on and its speed seemed increased. They were within two hundred yards of her when she recognized him. The knowledge came to her like the stab of a knife, but it gave her thought and swiftness. She leaped from the window with a cry, ran from the room and to the *patio* door, the one idea, to stop him, crystallized in her brain. She pushed and beat upon the door. It was locked and the terrified Doña Manuela had the key.

"The key! The key!" cried the girl, rushing frantically upon her. The old woman could not realize it or obey. It was too late. The horses' gallop was heard close to the spot. Clarita ran again

with a wild despair to the east window and seized the iron and called. It was he indeed. He was close to her. He was passing her. Madly she shrieked his name — the gallop drowned it and he had gone by, pulling up slightly to wheel the corner, wheeling it out of her sight. She was not one to bury her face. Her terror was too vast. She was at once at the south window, springing to its sill, seeing the chain, crying to him piteously.

Outside there had come to Fortino too the sound of the hoofs. He gave one more fierce laugh and steeled his mighty muscles. The cavalry came bursting round the corner upon him. He waited till the last second. He heard Quiroz's shrill scream, "Up with it! Up with it!" and felt Quiroz's fists beating his great back. He put out all his monstrous strength and the line of iron links swung up. He saw, then, Vicente's face, a fine, set, white face, and the eyes bent ahead. He recognized it, yet he did not recognize it. The time was too short. The great deed was too strong on him — bewilderment could not stop it; and Quiroz was screaming in his ears. Confused, he saw Clarita in the window beating the bars she could not break, pale as death and screaming. His neck swelled in bristling folds and his muscles were steel. The chain swung up and a link of it fell over the hook, and the cavalry, which in that second had rushed on to its doom, crashed against the unyielding iron barrier. Vicente in front, was thrown forward, over his horse's head, over the chain, falling stunned in the street beyond. His steed, with those beside it, was hurled back on haunches and the riders were cast to earth. The next beasts were upon them, and the next and the next dashed into the struggling heap. Men shrieked and went down amidst trampling hoofs

The whole distance to the corner and beyond it became one fearful mass of indiscriminate ruin; till, owing to the fact that there was necessarily some little distance between each successive five and the following five, the onward charge was at length stopped with all but less than one hundred pulled short in the river road, safe but panic-stricken, turning, fleeing.

At the moment of the shock the red dress had appeared suddenly in the street that led to the plaza. A moment more and the *jefe's* troop was down on the ruin. There was scarcely a shot fired, for there was scarce need of it. In the main, Rodrigo's men leaped from their horses and secured their prisoners. Those at whom they would have shot were round a corner, and there was no wading through that mass of man and beast. Vicente was picked up and carried into safety as were many more, and guarded. The work of extrication went on, and the mass was untangled. Rodrigo found himself trembling as he worked, as though from fear; and, looking up once through the bars of the window, he perceived the form of a girl lying there as though dead, and he saw that her hair was auburn.

On Fortino the terrible mistake, for mistake as yet he believed it, broke with a force beyond bitterness. The giant was rendered mad. He cast his eyes about like a dying ox. He saw the red dress of Pepa among his enemies. He grasped at the last straw to save his honor. He remembered, in the midst of that infernal confusion, that he had once promised to carry that girl out of danger, if danger should arise. He believed her beset by enemies. With a hideous sound that was more of a roar than a cry, and seeming crazy as the craziest lunatic, he burst through the enemy, man and horse, with a force like the force of a warship. He swung his arms and broke limbs as

he went. He came to the girl, and seized her from the ground, lifting her with a grip it would have taken ten men to loose. He plunged then with her, through the last obstruction, crying out something in a strange Indian tongue, and went striding away. She called to him and pleaded with him, and all but cursed him. She writhed and tore at his hair and face. It had no more effect on that striding giant than would have had a swarm of flies.

"Fortino can do something! O my Lord! He can take care of *ladies*! This is the field for the cursed — ladies — ladies!"

He strode on, turned the corner into the little lane, and came to the smithy, still crying out, still heeding not the writhings and the protestations of the girl. He opened the rear door and bore her through. He crossed that court where he had forged the iron, and came to the *patio* door. He mistakenly thought it was locked. With his last fury he dashed at it with his shoulder. It was not a strong door, and it burst like glass, and he tramped through. He went under the *patio's* waving trees and over its brick pavement. Doña Manuela was running to him, tottering. He heeded her not. He clung to the girl. He bore her under the tiled roof of the *corredor*, and all but flung her into the room where Clarita lay. Then, himself remaining outside, he banged the door to, locked it, and hurled the key into the air a hundred yards away. He sat down, after that, with his back to the wall, and blubbered.

"There, O woman!" cried he to the haggard lady. "There is your prize! I promised I would marry her. So help me, pinnacles of Heaven, I will marry her to the Archangel Gabriel, if you but speak the word. Damn me! Damn me!"

PART THIRD

THE ISLAND

CHAPTER I

SECRETS the church had in those old days, — unfathomable, dark, buried ones. The cloister, in its holiness, fostered, perchance, some unholy things. Here, as in the open world, doubtless some who rose did it by crushing some who fell; at times he who rose even crushed himself.

At Tizapan one may see the marsh, the river, the lake and river roads. He may behold, even in the midst of change, the street, the house, the spot. These are not all; there is a less important thing, — a jail wherein a speechless prisoner was confined on that same day; in which, though it was no dungeon, he was as buried as certain old monastery secrets, clerical hopes, crimes of the cloister.

The prisons of these small towns were usually of primitive sort. That in Chapala even now is of but one room. The Tizapan jail was, at the time of the disaster to Vicente's troops, of a similar simplicity. It was located in the centre of the town, on the main plaza, being behind Rodrigo as he waited there with his horsemen. Its floor was a space of hardened earth not more than fifteen feet square. There were no windows, only the large door of iron bars that led into the plaza. It was to this place, as

the only security immediately available, that the man captured at Chapala by Bonavidas had been brought. He had entered with the same oppressed, slavish manner, doggedly, not looking at his captors. Had Rodrigo then found a half hour to question him, he might have decided there was no point in his being held, and let him go. But, with no clear purpose, for he had no clear idea of him, the *jefe* locked him up till more important matters should be done with.

On entering, the creature had crept to the far corner, and sat down on the floor, after which, till four o'clock of the afternoon, he glared at the door. When Rodrigo's men had drawn themselves up in the plaza with clicking hoof and clinking spur, he had not moved, being like the insane who sit in a strained silence. When there had come the sound of a disaster and a panic somewhat distant, and when Rodrigo's horsemen had galloped away, he still had not moved, only glared with something more nearly like fire in his dull eyes. After that there were many sounds from many directions. Hours went by and the noon came, and no one approached the cell. Its inmate was buried away from all that action, and the things going on in the world were only a distant din to him. Wherefore the jail was like the material form of certain mental influences which had made the world only a distant din these long years. For a man's mind may be his surest prison.

At four o'clock in the afternoon he slowly removed his sombrero from his head and laid it on the floor. The hat was the color of jet. His hair was black and tangled, as always, and long enough to reach his shoulders. After a time he put his hand into

the pocket of his tight black trousers and drew it out empty; then he sat motionless for another space; after which he put his hand in the bosom of his shirt, also black, drew out a handkerchief and untied its knotted end, displaying a few coins and a white pocket-knife. He tied the coins in the cloth again, and put the little bundle back in his bosom, retaining the knife with purposeless manner. Later, having opened the blade, he marked with its point on the dirt floor. The afternoon light came abundantly in at the iron door and the marks showed clear in the earth. He made, slowly, the figures 1819, and sat and looked at them. Then he made them again in another place, and smaller: 1819. He made them a fourth and a fifth time. He did it laboriously, completely absorbed. He covered, at last, all the space within his reach with those figures. They were repeated behind and before him, to his right and left. When there was no more room without moving, he ceased for a time, and went over the rude display carefully, lingering, glazed of eye, at every number. After this he slowly arose and began working on the walls, and a space of a yard square became pretty well covered with the same figures. He was still marking 1819 in the adobes when some one came to the iron door.

He did not so much as turn. He stopped making the figures, and stood still with his hand lifted against the wall. The door was opened, the new comer entered, and the door was closed. The mute still stood in an incomprehensible immovability, as though stunned, and the figure behind stopped and gazed at the numbers on the wall and the floor. Then the mute began again, marking, still not hav-

ing turned, and cut 1819 once more with jagged irregularity.

"Has all this that you mark a meaning, friend, and is it this that makes you dumb, or are you only amusing yourself?" said the man behind.

The mute turned and beheld Rodrigo standing in the last light of the day. There was no reply.

"Come, man," said the *jefe*, throwing off a certain sombreness that he had worn, becoming easier of manner and advancing; "whether it is that you fear me, or that you have for some reason come to fear all men, or that you are acting with a genius that I could wish to transfer to a land where there are good stages — I do not know. Frankly, you do not look like a spy to me, nor have I expected to gather much out of you. I have to dispose of you somehow. I am come to see if I can gratify myself by letting you go. I have brought ink and paper and pen that you may write, and time is limited. Now pen it out, plainly, and give me your deeds and intentions."

The mute's eyes held a slumberous fire as he took the paper, which fire did not render the distorted countenance less hideous. He made, not without difficulty, the words:

"Take me back across the lake."

"But I cannot be so free with you," said the *jefe*, "for I have other matters. Write me something of yourself."

The mute, crouching to the floor in an attitude of fear, penned out:

"He will starve. He was ill."

"This same thing twice," said Rodrigo. "Who is he?"

The mute thought long and stupidly, and then

sighed, — that kind of sigh that seems beyond all anguish, to which a groan would be but as the expression of relief. Then he wrote, very slowly:

“The worse than God. The stronger than Hell.”

“Thou poor fool,” muttered Rodrigo, stooping, too, and fastening his eyes on the other’s, concentrating all his mind to read him. “There is no God nor any hell that will starve. It is you, wrecked heart, and I, chip in the sea, that starve. Come, friend, what is this to you? What will it matter to you if he starve?”

Something startling swept over the other’s face. He wrote again:

“Then I would follow her. I would do it then — do it. I would walk into the sky. I am a slave. Let me go. Take me back across the lake.”

“If it is your hallucination that some one binds you, why not let him starve, if this be his tendency? This will free you.”

The other sank into the dull unreadableness again. He began after a time to rewrite the sentence, “Take me back.” He did not finish the last word, becoming abstracted, and presently returned once more to his slow, rapt marking of figures. They stood out on the paper once, twice, thrice — 1819.

There came another person to the door. Dusk was coming on. The plaza was shadowed and the jail was growing dark.

“Don Rodrigo,” said a suave voice without, “this is a secluded spot for a little conference. Let me in.”

Rodrigo stood up. He saw that the man outside was Doroteo Quiroz, his handsome figure having approached noiselessly. His lips were pressed tightly together, and his moustaches were visible in

the half light as black points. The two looked full at one another for a moment; then Rodrigo walked gravely to the door, which he had locked after entering, and let the visitor in. Quiroz's manner was full of the Mexican superficial politeness and elegance.

"Do me the favor, then, señor," said he, bowing with his fingers on his breast, "to extend me the hand of a brave *caballero* and a victorious one."

He stretched out his own, and with scarcely perceptible hesitation Rodrigo took it, somewhat coldly.

"We are of different races," began Quiroz. "Good. We could thus combine what is fair and amiable out of north and south. You know me for a Mexican. You are expecting fair words and no deeds. Quiroz is a gambler. This freely. But I am going to give you a proof that he can go to a point without wavering. Hence, listen to me: for whatever folly there is in me, if ever in my life I meant what I said, may Mary die and the church be proved a harlot if I am not in earnest now. I will speak in the presence of this idiot here, for I know him. He has been a crazy shadow on the lake for many a month. They say he is the ghost who haunts Prison Island. You will learn nothing from him but you do not need to."

Rodrigo stood up tall and still, his customary whiteness of face slightly more marked. He kept a somewhat cold gaze on Quiroz, and at times there was the bare suggestion of a sneer on his lips, but, withal, his manner had in it a certain proper deference and attention.

"Go on," said he.

"Don Rodrigo, you are a fighter. The man who

created a new idea and carried it out as you did, is one to whom I am pleased to doff my hat. You are no dreamer. You are a man of action. So much for my views of your ability. Pardon me if I say that you as yet have no knowledge of Doroteo Quiroz. Do you fancy I put myself on a plane above my deserts? Far from it. There is no veriest prop of virtue who knows more surely than do I that the word to be applied to me is traitor—unblushingly. I plead guilty; yet I would have you recall that there are more kinds of traitors than one, and a treason may be built on an honest foundation. Why did I enter Vicente's scheme? Because I am a gambler. I pretend to be nothing else. My one unalterable ambition has ever been to gain for myself, strictly for myself, the greatest power and the richest success possible to me. Vicente's was the biggest game at hand. I had no more than entered it when I saw his weakness. For he dreams too much. This I know. I am as honest as truth when I say that I believed success impossible to him. That kind of nature will come to the day of ruin sooner or later. Well, am I to be blamed for cold judgment? No; for judgment with me is as spontaneous as an emotion. You can call a man mistaken for his judgment—you cannot call him criminal. We praise constancy; we talk much of faith. In God's name, is it constancy to wreck a previous and constant course by clinging to that which will wreck it? Half the condemned treachery in the world is constancy to an idea that was dominant before the thing betrayed was born, an idea that thus had the precedence. My previous ambitions would brook no continuance with Vicente. To wreck him a few weeks or months before his in-

evitable wrecking of himself was but to make less his ruin. In this, do me the favor to observe, I was true to myself, which is called the first virtue.

"Ay, Quiroz is a gambler, but the gambler is telling you simply a mathematical fact when he says that the man who knows me thus, who does not consider me honest, and yet perceives whereto I am indomitably constant, can steer his course with mine with the safety of faith. Don Rodrigo, a revolt like this is not the measure of my ambition. Mexico is tottering. Santa Anna has left the capital sapped of its powers and is marching to Taylor and a sure defeat. Meanwhile I am here with more than a thousand horsemen at my back. For what have you done? You captured the leader and some forty others, dead and living. The rest fled. When a path could be cut through the street, your lieutenants pursued the fugitives. They captured scarcely a dozen. The rest are scattered. But you know as well as I that I have means of gathering them up. They will come when I call. You, Don Rodrigo, are at the head of two hundred. Listen. I have no desire to try issues with a man like you. I would rather we try them together. We are here on the lake's southern side. Mexico City is not so very far to the southeast. It is left without an army. It is ever in a weakened state of discord. Come; the time is ripe. We gather recruits on the way; for I know the people. He who marches into the capital now with two thousand men is its master. I tell you again Taylor will defeat Santa Anna. The Americans will come on. We cannot fight them; we shall not try. They must then deal with him who holds the government. The United States will not dare annex the country. She has too many

troubles of her own. I have studied this matter long since. She will likely rob us of some of our northern provinces. Well, who remains with the rest?"

He paused; he lifted a steady hand and drew out the point of his moustache. Then an audacious smile played on his features. Rodrigo said nothing. He held his eyes unmoved and stared straight into those of Quiroz. The shadow of disdain was still on his lips, and his face wore something of hauteur.

"Don Rodrigo, you are a man of deeds, and you love power. That leader who marches in while the army is away — to him shall the power be."

Rodrigo was silent for some moments.

"Quiroz," said he, coldly, "for what you have done the government thanks you. I myself cannot be insincere enough to do so, nor to agree with you, nor to act with you; for I find you most eminent in ability to do that thing which the Greeks called making the worse appear the better reason."

With this Rodrigo turned somewhat stiffly away, as though to continue his conversation with the mute, who had not moved. If there was any resentment in Doroteo the gloom did not permit that it be visible on his face. He was too much Quiroz to show it in words.

"This is final?" said he.

"This is final," replied Rodrigo.

"Then do me the favor," said Quiroz, with his teeth shut and a smile glittering on his face, "to offer me, in parting, the hand of a gentleman."

Rodrigo offered it.

"Excellent to be frank," said Quiroz. "Well to go straight to all points. And in leaving (in

which," and he gripped the other's hand with extreme force, "my purpose is to gather up my troops), — in leaving, allow me to express rather a strengthened than a diminished faith in your abilities, señor. *Adios. Hasta la vista!* I am sorry that I can make no use of the esteemed gratitude of the government."

"*Adios,*" said the *jefe*.

This stilted conversation being finished, Doroteo went out. If there had been, in his reference to his troops, any hint of a threat, he was not the man to have let it appear in his tone or his face. Whatever gall was in him as he departed, the elegant Quiroz, the deceiver, would not speak it out, even by a word, even in the midst of his bitterest resentment. There can be no doubt that the highest lustre of his scheme faded with this failure. But he bowed himself out with grace and went his feline way. Outside, however, could one have seen his face he would have noted keen hate and steely desperation in it. He was resolved that, despite all obstacles, the scattered force that had been Vicente's should at once be his.

Referring once more to the threat that the reference to troops might have contained — that reference hung in Rodrigo's mind when Quiroz was gone. He stood in the almost dark jail, staring into the darkness. He meditated thus for some minutes, with something of a turmoil under the calm that sat on his face. He must not risk losing his advantage. He had that instinctive tenacity which is a characteristic of his people; this, added to a natural determination, completely to fulfil the task intrusted to him.

"There is no prison in Guadalajara that is suffi-

ciently safe," he mused. "The strongest was wrecked in the last revolution. The other is yet unfinished. That nest of troubles is no place for him. Even the journey thither might be disastrous, for it would be through a country of his allies."

He gazed yet other minutes into the darkness. He went out then, procured a candle and matches, and returned. He entered, locked the door, and lit the candle. The mute was still crouched in the darkest corner, his sombrero again on his head, pulled down far over his face. Only the chin and the scar were visible when the match was touched to the candle. He held the paper in his hand as though he had been staring at it in the dark. Rodrigo came and kneeled down before him, putting the candle on the earthen floor. He saw, too, that the pen and the ink were at hand.

"You wish to be free," said Rodrigo, in a low tone.

There was no reply, but the man lifted his face and looked at him.

"You wish to be free, is it not so?" said Rodrigo.

The mute took the pen and wrote as before:

"Take me across the lake."

"Listen," was the reply. "I will take you across the lake. I will do it to-night. We will start at once, and when we arrive at the opposite shore you shall be free. All this if you can do one thing for me."

The figure before him distorted the scar into something that might have been a smile, horrifying as it was.

"Do you know an island between here and Mescala which they call Prison Island?"

The mute was as still as stone, with a dead color on his face.

"An island," continued Rodrigo, "whereon there are ruins of great buildings and nothing else. Come — you are a kind of bat on the lake; do you know it?"

"Yes," wrote the mute, his hand shaking.

"Have you been there?"

There was no reply, only glassy eyes and the scar.

"Man," said Rodrigo, whispering, and with sternness, "do you want to be locked in a blacker prison than this and to stay there? You know this island; I have heard that you do. Answer me quickly and plainly if you want freedom or mercy."

"I know it," wrote the other in mute fear. "I have been there."

"Do you know its coasts and whether there is a cove that might serve as a harbor? Could you steer a *canoa* into safety at that island, avoiding the rocks, landing us without danger, even in the night and with waves?"

With that rock-like silence again his only expression of emotion, the other, after a long time of dull pondering, wrote:

"I know it."

"You could do it in safety?"

"Yes."

"Friend," said the *jefe*, "let me give you full warning. I am your comrade if you treat me well. Do as I wish and I shall send you on to the opposite shore, and you shall be free. If you fail me or deceive me, I am more likely to kill you than to let you live. Mark me. I, too, know the location of the island. Any attempt to steer us away is useless. I, too, have been there, but I approached from the other side, and I have no knowledge of

the rocks and the shore. So I take you for the landing. Get me safe on that island and you are free. If you wreck me — well, I can swim and shall have as good a chance as you. Now I am going to trust you. I do not believe you will play me false. Freedom it is, my man. Will you go?"

"When?" wrote the other, his hand shaking again.

"Now."

The distortion of the mute's visage was then unintelligible. It may have meant mad delight — it may have meant abject terror. He was able to write, "Yes," and Rodrigo arose and left him with the candle; and the slow waving flame with its blue rings round it cast light on the creature's face and over his body, and displayed an agitation such that it must have struck awe in any that saw it.

Scarcely half an hour went by before there came steps again at the door. It was unlocked, and Bonavidas and another entered.

"Come on," said Bonavidas, taking the mute's arm and compelling him to arise. "Save us! he is stiff as a corpse. Brace up — this is no march to the grave, though we are both good candidates for it. I dare say the worm that has you at last, my stiff prisoner, will have feasted on me first; but he will still be far from fat — ha! ha! Bitter will have been his first disappointment, and, if I am a judge of fowl, as bitter will be the next — for the arm of this skeleton is thin."

His companion shuddered a little and wrapped a purple blanket round him, covering the half of his face. The three went out. There was not much stir, and few people were in the plaza. The wounded and the excitement were farther back in

that quarter of the town nearest the mountains. Eyed by only a few passers-by the three entered the street to the river. Farther ahead in its gloom, faintly lit by an oil street lamp, could be seen a squad of soldiers with a prisoner in their midst, moving in the same direction. Whereas the mute went crouchingly, with face buried under his hat, that other prisoner walked with something of stateliness. Those who saw his face on that march said it was not like the dark faces of Mexico — one would have thought he came from some other land — that his carriage was marked by a gentle pride, and his eyes were so deep and so strangely sad that a child, looking on them, wept and ran away. There was a wound, too, on one temple, and his left shoulder and arm were bandaged and carried stiffly.

It was thus it chanced that Rodrigo, Vicente, the mute, Bonavidas, and some twenty soldiers, met that night on the river's bank, where the marshes stretched out into darkness and the waves could be faintly heard. The wind was from a little west of south; not the best for the journey, but, if it should last sufficiently long, serviceable. Some of the *canoas'* owners had sailed away; but haste is not a characteristic of the land, and there were novel things in Tizapan to see. More than half of the craft that had threaded their way to the landing in the early morning were still there. The party that now arrived selected two of the best.

The huts were deserted. The town lay yonder, black and silent; the night was a starry one. Certain townspeople, few in number, came stealthily after the party of soldiers to see, and stood in the gloom at a little distance from the river. With something more nearly like reverence than author-

ity, for he could not control his sentiments nor the moving of his heart which a certain majesty of bearing in his prisoner had caused, Rodrigo ordered Vicente into the second of the two boats and manned that vessel with half his twenty men. Some weapons and ammunition were put therein also. He himself went to the *canoa* in front. He was silent, chilled. He could not go in the same vessel with his captive; it would take, said he, a vaster strength than he had. Bonavidas was left in control of that rear ship.

The mute and certain other weapons and ammunition, together with stores of provisions, were put in the forward boat, which was manned by the other soldiers. All being aboard, the poling was silently begun, and the dark, winding course down the river between the walls of reeds was entered upon.

The few townspeople turned back to the things of unhappy interest in the town, where the rest of the *jefe's* men, under a trusted soldier chosen for that place, guarded some less important prisoners in a great adobe hall once used as a storehouse for golden fruit, product of summer suns and mountain torrents and the free air and the free soil of a land of curious liberty. The destination of the vessels was known only to those in them and to some of the soldiers behind. The secret was locked and the guide was mute. There were adequate instructions left, also, concerning immediate notification of any new events, and bonfire signals explained and well remembered. In the stern of his ship the *jefe* stood, not rejoicing over victory, not happy with success. There was the picture in the *jefe's* mind of a small woman with strange hair and a face sorrowful as he had last seen it in the improvised hospital, where they revived

her brother, bandaged his wounds, and let her come in.

It was well that, the last vessel being some twenty yards down stream, the *jefe's* vision was only a vision and not the woman herself. There had crept down to the bank, after those other townspeople, a slight figure unseen by the others. The others were gone when she ran silently to the landing and saw the two vessels, indistinguishable bulks of gloom, going away yonder in the reeds, and heard the soft, soft splash of the poles in muddy water. She wanted to cry out, but could not. She sank down, not burying her face, but gazing out over the flat marsh and the unseen lake. She sat there some long hours after every sound had ceased, and the silence was like death.

CHAPTER II

IF, at the bottom of the long scale of human unhappiness, there be an absolute misery like the theoretical absolute zero of the thermometer, the great Fortino was at that degree, a point of dead, cold despair, where there is no motion, which motion would be heat, heat of anger, or hope, or thrilling recollection, a point whereat the unimaginable depression is like the frigidity that cannot be felt, that would freeze the very nucleus of the first cell that should begin to stir into thought or emotion, — a point, however, from which reaction is not altogether impossible.

Toward noon of the day of the disaster, he had trod across the brick pavement of the *patio*, where the round ball of his great shadow mingled with the flecking shadows of trees. He had entered the rear court through the remnant of the door he had shattered, and being in that barer and drearier space, with the anvil and white ashes of a charcoal fire not far distant, he had sat himself down on the ground by the stables and had stayed there. When Doroteo had come and begged that the silent monster volunteer some information as to the key of the room wherein the girls were locked, he had not appeared to respond even in thought. His face assumed the beginnings of a look of scorn that he should be assaulted with details at a time like this. The scorn became frozen and went out, and there was

nothing more to be drawn from him. As the key had been hurled in some unknown direction through the high clear air of that memorable morning, the door to which it had belonged was at length broken open by Doroteo and his *moso*, during which act Fortino was not present, being still sitting by the stables; nor did he know or care when the good Doña Manuela, trembling like a reed in a wind, expended her motherly care on her of the auburn locks and brought the girl to.

There was little of any sort of movement during that day in the rear court of stables. Doroteo passed through it several times, quick, absorbed. The *moso* came and fed some animals and said something to Fortino, whom he eyed with curiosity. But Fortino did not reply. Then, for hours, there was nothing but the horses, the adobes, the bare earth, the anvil and the *brasero* over which the sun poured its yellow autumn flood. There, too, was directed the great man's gaze. The anvil's shadow grew longer as the hours went by, the light about it became yellower, and at length the shadows of western objects beyond came and took away the yellow. The dusk came on. But Fortino did not cease to stare at that mass of iron and the chalky pile of ashes, which last an evening breeze lifted and made white dust. They came and begged him to eat; but he would not. Doña Manuela came likewise, at length having the servants bring dishes and set them before him. They remained untouched. So the lady sighed, and, with her head turned looking at Fortino, she and the sky-blue dress and the gray hair went back into the front *patio*.

It grew dark, and the night wind swirled among the stables. The early stars gave way to later ones.

Odd birds, common in these parts, flew silently overhead and hissed short, quick, startling hisses at him out of the night, as though to warn him or to awaken him or to make uncanny jests at him. At some time after midnight he rolled over heavily and sunk into a sleep that, for its broken snorings and its nightmares, was a thing dreadful to hear. When, in the early morning, the *mozo* came to feed the horses, Fortino was again sitting erect. Later there was a second attempt to get him to eat, as fruitless as the first. In this Doña Manuela again participated, full of anxiety for the poor man's mind, though not well comprehending what was the matter with him.

"Alas! alas!" cried she at length, in despair, "this good, large man will starve!"

Anastasio was one of those who heard this remark. Neither he nor Fortino had been sought after by Vicente's captors, Quiroz having left the impression that the fishermen were a part of the treason. The philosopher had but just now entered by the rear alley, and the early morning beams fell on his long body and showed his languid calmness. He had not been seen here till now since he rode away so swiftly, more than a full day previous. He came sauntering in much as he sauntered anywhere else. He stood and gazed at the inert Fortino in thoughtful mood.

"No, señora," said Anastasio. "He will not starve. I should say two months from to-day, if he be still here, there may be call for alarm."

"Oh! but señor!" cried the anxious lady with much earnestness, "he has eaten nothing for twenty-four hours!"

"Señora, have you, then, not heard of the camels?"

They say a camel will live many days off his humps. And whereas he does well on two, Fortino has an infinite number; and better yet, the other beast contends with the drawback that the space between the two is vacant. Fortino has this advantage, that all the spaces between his many are filled up, so that his figure presents a smooth and reassuring surface. I should say there is nutriment enough in Fortino to last two moons."

The lady finally withdrew, she and the servants carrying the untouched dishes, and Anastasio sat down in front of the giant.

"Bravery is a good thing," said he, and paused, calmly meeting Fortino's lurid gaze with his own. He made his remarks at a considerable distance from each other, and in the nature of speculations. "Faith, too, works what I should call — wonders. To wade into the sea, I will be sworn, is more glorious than it is wet, which is saying much. Fortino, if you do not take something you will be eating your bodily ability. But if he who works not shall not eat, he who eats not need not work, wherein there is comfort. I have thought many a time, which is best, glory or idleness? But I didn't know anything about the former, so I stuck to the other, being aware of its good points. Yesterday was a fine day. You should have seen the lake on yesterday and heard the note of the dove. The lake sparkled, and the dove, she sang."

Fortino rolled heavily into a slightly different position, gazing at the anvil, and something like a smothered groan was in him.

"Our comrade in bravery," said Anastasio, "where is he? Francisco is —"

There was a cautious creaking at the rear door

that led into the alley, and the door was slightly opened. A head came through, showing a gaunt face of stealth and terror, and eyes like dollars.

"Come in," drawled Anastasio with whining impatience, — "come in, brother; there is no cavalry here."

Francisco cautiously closed the door behind him, and, looking ever to all sides, as though in fear of treachery, crept up and sat down.

"I am afraid of no cavalry," said he, with a faint attempt at bluster. "I—I—oh, friends! where is the enemy!"

"Can it, then, be that you were out of the fight? This accounts for the misfortune."

"If every man had had *my* discretion, friend," cried Francisco, "there would have been no misfortune. I know when to make a retreat with dignity. There is one thing about me, if I am a fisherman — I learn the art of war rapidly."

"At a gallop," said the long one. "Fortino, awake, till I give you the history of this man of valor. When we came on to the town, I having delivered my message (with a faith, Fortino, speaking of faith, that classed me immediately with angels), I having delivered it, had trouble with my horse. Francisco was riding near the front. It was convenient, when he had learned of the enemy ahead, for Francisco suddenly to conceive and bear a prodigy of brotherly love, which led him to drop behind to assist me. And the farther behind we lagged, beating my steed, the kindlier was Francisco. When at last my horse stopped I was ungentle enough to curse this brother, and he went on. He was the last member of the cavalry when it entered the street. From a long distance away

on the lake road I saw him lumbering in last, and his speed was not high. He was out of my sight in the town something less than one minute. Ah—he learned the art of war in that space of time. Francisco is peculiarly quick at learning. I saw him issue, having learned the art, like a rocket from a newly blessed house, and there was a blue vapor arising from him as he came on. The rapidity of his learning increased as he advanced; his horse's nose pierced air like the point of a bullet. He wheeled into the lake road a full half mile ahead of the next fugitive, and bore down on me so that I had barely time to pull a little to one side. I heard him crying out to me before he came near: 'Fly! Fly!' Then he swept by with a wind that raised my sombrero and blew my hair across my cheek, shrieking: 'I will—save—my—honor!' I perceived then that the rest were coming, and, Francisco having become a little smoke in the distance, and the others having likewise fled past me in confusion, I said to myself, sitting meditating on my steed, 'There is agitation in the town.' Finding at length that the horse would no longer balk, but would go on at a slow gait, '*Si*,' said I to myself, 'I will go in where the agitation is.' When I was on the point of entering the town I saw that sickly man that is with the *jefe* dashing out with troops in pursuit. I was feeling tired at that time, and in need of quiet. So I drew up at the roadside and sat with both my pistols aimed at the comers and resting easily on the saddle's pommel; and they dared not touch me, I did fill them so with dread. Said the sickly one as he went by on a gallop, 'Put up your guns, child, there are bigger birds than you!' '*Si*,' said I, 'but they fly high. Francisco,

for one, flies exceeding high.' When they were gone, and I came on in and saw the scene of the trouble, and thought again of the fugitives, there was one point that was a great comfort to me. 'There is one thing they will never get,' said I, pleased. 'They will never catch Francisco's honor.'"

"I tell you, idiot, it was my discretion that saved me. Fly? Did not they all fly? That there was some terrible thing ahead I knew, and I saved my abilities for another time. I was cool, I was calculating. There are times, fool, when it is best to be wise!"

Francisco was recovering himself, and he uttered this principle with a great gesture.

"And wherein did I next show wisdom?" he continued. "Listen, you who were two miles from the fight. As soon as I was round the first point of rocks toward Jiquilpan, my horse stumbled and threw me. The rest caught up with me and passed and scattered into the mountains, or went on. Then I heard the enemy coming. So I beat my horse away, and he went off crazy toward Jiquilpan to distract attention from me who remained behind. This is a science called in war, strategy. It is by strategy that great things are done in war, and by strategy that great men occupy their minds. And not everybody, let me tell you, señores, has mind enough so that strategy can occupy it; no, señores. It was by strategy that the big fight at Hannibal was won, with the rings. I have read history and I know how to employ principles. So the horse went galloping off to distract attention. The distracting attention is one of the leading things in strategy. Next I leap straight into the lake, and dive. There were rocks there, and I dived to the

other side of them. This again was good strategy. If I had stayed this side of the rocks I might have had to come up for breath at the wrong time. Many great strategies have been thus ruined. When the enemy was gone I came out on the bank. I confess I was sore from scraping myself on a boulder. Hence, I limped into the mountains, and lay down and hid, and I saw the enemy come back. And, owing to my strategy, he did not have me. I am not any fool, brothers. At night I decided that the heroic thing was to come back. And I have limped some three miles during the night. I was hungry. I slept a little outside the town and have limped in here. I did it boldly — I was not terrified. I walked in like a lion, señores."

"You appeared so, indeed," said Anastasio.

Fortino had no more than barely heard, if indeed he had done so much. He was dumb.

"There are some ideas about yesterday," said Anastasio, "that confuse me."

No one replied and the three were as though thinking.

"*Si*," continued the long one, "there are things that mix me."

"You did not mix in the things, ha! ha!" broke out Francisco with the knowledge of a fine bit of humor.

"My horse had not learned the art of war," was the chilly response. "He kept my discretion to the rear, instead of whizzing there with it afterward. *Si*, there are matters of directions, messages, and deeds, that are not clear. If this great body here could speak he might tell me why he blocked the way. But never mind, we will lay it on to the Holy Virgin."

The great body revolved slightly, but ponderously,

and Fortino's eyes, inflamed and swelled, looked out of Fortino's unshaven face at Anastasio like the eyes of a gorgon.

"When Doroteo gave me my message," said Anastasio meditatively, "he made no mention of anything wrong with Fortino. Was it, Fortino, that you had slept in the night air? I left you slumbering like a babe. Were you dreaming, even then, of that treason?"

A rage like a burning furnace was suddenly born in the giant. He grew inconceivably hot. He arose with an awful majesty. He stamped the ground and strode to and fro before his wondering comrades.

"Treason! Treason!" he growled like some wild beast. "Who talks of treason! Who dares call me traitor! What message did you carry, blot on earth?" He strode nearer and shook his huge fist in the face of his unmoved torturer. "Stand up and give me your own perfidy. What message, worm! worm! did you, then, carry away when you left me asleep in my untouched honesty!"

"Make it plain — plain say I," broke in Francisco. "It has puzzled me too. But I have not learned even what happened. Come at it, friends; his demand, Anastasio, is just. Was it some strategy?"

"What was it?" repeated Anastasio, on whose acute mind much of the true situation had long since dawned. He spoke with a labored innocence. "It was the message Quiroz gave me — what else? And I, too, carried it away in my untouched honesty. I have already said that I showed a faith that was pleasing to the Lord."

"But what was it, worm!" roared Fortino.

"What, then, did he tell *you*, lime-kiln?" was the response.

"Just, too," put in Francisco.

"He told me, damn you, that you had gone to warn him of the enemy's coming."

"This is white truth," said Anastasio. "This is pure innocence. He was right. Doroteo's honesty, too, was untouched. We were a good honest trio, and this also, I dare say, pleased the Lord."

"He told me, too," continued Fortino, bending over and holding his fist always before the other, speaking in growls and roars, "that Vicente was to come over the other bridge, the bridge toward the mountains and take his stand in the plaza."

"Ah, brother, but the other bridge is gone. I went yesterday, when the dew fell, and looked at the place. Brother," he repeated with infinite gentleness, "there *is* no other bridge."

"But he told me," cried Fortino with a great gasp and burning to the roots of his hair, "that the bridge was rebuilt!"

"I wonder if this, too," whined the long one, "pleased the Lord."

"He said — he said — that the enemy was coming up the river road! Tell me, then, what your message was, and tell me quick—I can stand no more!"

"While you lay slumbering like a babe, brother, he told me that the enemy should be in the plaza and I should direct Vicente up the river road."

"I can swear," said Francisco excitedly, "that this same message Anastasio delivered with speed and honesty."

The full realization of the treachery broke slowly over the giant's ponderously moving mind. He turned about in his smothered rage and stared like a crazy one at the house of Quiroz. Then his eyes

went wild and swept over the unmoved Anastasio and the excited Francisco. The perspiration suddenly poured in streams from his face and he strode away heavily, like a mighty mechanism, toward the rear door that led into the alley. He came to the anvil and seized it up. He turned and lifted the mass of iron in both hands high over his head. For a second he held it there, a statue of some enraged Hercules ready to crush the world. Then he hurled it with the force of a field-gun straight through the clear morning air, over the heads of his comrades, till it crashed into the wall that divided the stable court from the house's *patio*. It tore a hole in that wall big enough for a child to hide himself in, and sent the adobes flying shattered. The hurler turned majestically about and proceeded toward the alley. He came to the door, turned again, and shook his fist at the house and stamped the dust of the accursed place from his feet, crying hoarsely:

"Let me see you no more!"

He went out and banged the door so that one of its planks split from top to bottom, and they heard him going away crying:

"Son of hell! Son of hell!"

He trod thus out of the town and to the borders of the lake, and there where there was loneliness and the morning sun and breeze and the plaintive note of the dove, he sat himself down by the marsh.

His two companions remained for some time where they were.

"I had foreseen," said Francisco at last, "that it was some strategy."

CHAPTER III

THAT some one else on the premises of Quiroz had passed as bad a night as had Fortino, the giant could not know. The day before, during all the hours that succeeded the catastrophe, Pepa had not left the house. She had stayed chiefly in her room; when she had come out it was in silence. Clarita perceived a great change in her erstwhile vivacious friend. Pepa, during that day and the night that followed it, was a haunted woman. Somehow the horror of the deed had been too great, too monstrous, for one so young as she.

She was not incapable of remorse. It was not so much that she was faithless or irresistibly wicked. It was rather to be considered entirely from the opposite view-point, — she loved overpoweringly, and in her love was a passion really mad; her nature was not trained either by heredity or environment to collect the scattered elements of good in her character and make a chain to resist the evil course of her love. During that day she did not venture out to find him whom she loved, and who, she believed in her unsophisticated mind, had encouraged her to the deed, had even silently offered her the reward. She did not venture out simply because, long to as she might, she could not. She found herself powerless, dreading seeing him as much as she desired it. For now that the deed was done, and she had seen it, its hideousness was visible to her. There crept into her un-

tutored heart some instinctive fear that that white man — he who awed her and won her, and whose race and its civilization were mysteries to her — might be revolted by this treachery. She dared not think that out — she only felt it. So she was afraid and wretched all that day, full of her love and her hopes, recalling over and over the night at Ocotlan and his face when it held out promises to her. Hence, for the time, the treachery and the wildness were gone, as though she had been two women.

All that day she found herself perversely and persistently trying to hear nothing of that which went on in the town. In her revulsion of feeling she would listen to nothing. Doña Manuela and Clarita, after a few attempts at drawing her out (they were in ignorance of her part in the drama, though Clarita feared her as always), held instinctively aloof. Quiroz found he could make nothing of her, and went away pondering on this new mood, realizing that he might never get to the bottom of this strange woman, and, for that very reason, fascinated the more. She shut herself up before it was dark, and was not again seen till morning. She lay dressed, realizing every minute that she might be losing the last chance to see Rodrigo, but nevertheless, because of that silent, instinctive fear, unable to move. For something like twenty hours out of her life she lost her daring. Hence the night was one of an emotion that it is hardly too extravagant to call agony.

When dawn came, she having slept but little, it seemed that the light of a new day brought her somewhat back to herself. She arose, and that very action revived her. She felt her old daring and spirit somewhat returned. She made her toilet with her mind full of half-formed purposes and her blood

high. She was less of a woman, doubtless, than she had been in her sullen silence of the day before; but she was Pepa once more. She was sorry she had let all the day and night go by in inaction. Then, it being still early, about the time, indeed, when Fortino was shaking the dust of the place from his feet, Quiroz knocked, was admitted, and told her of the departure of the *jefe* with his prisoner.

"I tried, incomprehensible and ever-maddening woman, to let you know of this last night, but you would not respond to the tapping of a lover's fingers on your door. 'The fair one is asleep,' said I; 'and after all, what matter? The thing is done; why trouble one's brains about the destiny of this *jefe*? Let the fair one sleep.' Which I did, though I longed to read your dreams."

There was but little change of expression on Pepa's face, for she was again nearly mistress of herself; but that little Quiroz perceived. And with her subsequent questions and actions there came to him the first vague suspicion of a possible truth—but it did not form itself into a positive doubt.

"Where have they gone?" asked she, quietly.

"Where else but to the city?" responded he. "But the *jefe* is sometimes original. It would be, so it seems to me, folly to go to Guadalajara. Yet I believe there he has gone. On the other hand, it would be like him to stop on the island. He could hold that against many *canoas*, and the rocks and waves would help him; but the project is a little reckless. What matters it? He and Vicente are gone; and permit me, in the last bottom of my heart, to curse that *jefe politico*."

She came and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Then you have failed," she said, fastening on his

the eyes that began to dance with light. "He would not join in the great scheme. You are bitter over this, Doroteo. It has disappointed you more than you will say. The canker of it is still in you."

"There was some tameness in him," said he. "It seemed to me like an omen. I used to quit the game when I felt like this. But since it is so, I am glad he did not stay. I should have been tempted, when I gather up the army, to whip him for a kind of devilish delight I should take in it. Now, what do I care; what does Josefa Aranja care? She trusts me; she knows I can pick up this scattered force. Pepa, I will do all that I have sworn to do or die."

"Then at it," she said firmly, and dazzling him with the smile he had not seen for many hours. "Go. If I am inspiration to you, remember now how I send you away. I call you a hero. I put my hands on your shoulders, so. I look into your eyes, so. I give you all hope, all promise. Go now; do not delay one hour. For you carry with you my love."

She half whispered the last with an odd pensiveness. He was glittering of eye and full of bounding blood. He would have seized her and kissed her, but she broke suddenly away, and, with a touch of coldness, bade him leave her.

"Then, pretty tigress, I am to have no pledge?"

"Tigress is a good word, in books; you have used it before; but it is not I. Pledge? Rapacious Quiroz! Look; when I arise a few mornings hence and step to this window and see you riding up the street with an army at your back, then you may have it — never, never, never till then!"

So he left her, fired with his enthusiasm, the canker and the omen no more in his mind, reckless and stealthy Quiroz. The *mozo* saddled a horse for him

and Doroteo, not so much as taking leave of his fluttering mother, mounted it in the *patio* and rode away.

It was not long after that that Pepa found Clarita alone under the trees of the *patio*. The sad Clarita sat on a bench there, deep in her troubled thoughts, a silent girl, almost a hopeless one. The flecks of sunlight coming through the mass of leaves, made shining spots of gold on her hair. Pepa came up quietly. She was again the old lovable Pepa. She put her arm tenderly round Clarita's waist.

"What are you dreaming about so sadly?" asked she.

"Vicente," said Clarita.

"You knew that they took him away last night?"

"I saw him go," was the reply.

"No one knows where he has gone unless it be you, Clarita. Do you know?"

"I do not know. But I know where it may be."

Pepa smoothed the other's hair.

"Where?" asked she. "To Guadalajara?"

"No, I do not believe they would take him there."

"Then where?"

"To Prison Island."

"Why?"

"From something Don Rodrigo said when we were coming," said Clarita.

Then she told her what it was. There was a long and earnest conversation after that between the two. There was suddenly born a purpose in Pepa's mind, but before she could speak it, Clarita herself had urged the deed; for in the latter's feminine heart there was bravery of its kind, and, least expected of all perhaps, an ingenuity and creative talent, not exceedingly prominent but, in the one great subject,

capable of conceiving and doing. There were plans laid, and a course was determined on. A half hour later Clarita arose with new light and hope in her face. She went alone into the rear *patio*.

"Where is Fortino?" she asked.

"He went out of that door," replied Anastasio, "and I heard him making the river road shake with his walking on it."

She returned, went into the street by the *patio* door, and proceeded toward the river. She asked several whom she passed for news of him. One had seen a very large man yonder by the shore. Thither she came, finding him sitting in a small bare space between the lake road and the marsh, his eyes fixed on the dark water that lay silent among the reeds. The flat marsh was green and shining in the morning sun, with the river winding through it a glistening band. There was little wind. Doves in the trees were still making their sad sounds, of all in nature fittest music to the scene.

The fisherman did not hear her approach. She came where he sat, and laid her small hand on his shoulder. He turned his head slowly, and looked at her, without much evidence of recognition.

"Fortino," she said gently, "you are very wretched over yesterday. At least I, Fortino, do not believe that it is you who are to blame. I think I even know who is, and, except that I was so weak from grief and did not know where to turn, and Doña Manuela was kind, I could not have stayed in his house. I cannot return thither. Fortino, do not despair. There is always a way for the faithful one, and you are Vicente's friend. Listen to me; I will tell you how we might do something, at least come where he is, so that you can let him know you did not mean it

I, too, will tell him that, and we will not feel hard against you. Do you hear, Fortino?"

He looked into her tender eyes. The animal-like man melted before her, and that odd old Fortino actually wept, of a sudden, like a child. Then she continued, putting her hand on his, being very sorry for him:

"Don Rodrigo and some soldiers and two vessels went away across the lake last night at dark, taking Vicente. I saw them. Nobody knows where they went, but I have good reasons for thinking it was to the island that lies out there seven leagues distant. And this is why. When we were coming, Don Rodrigo and I talked of the island, and he said he had been there. He said, too, he did not like to speak of it, for, if the course of the war took a certain turn, he might have to do what he should not like to do. I did not understand him, but I think now he was thinking of the capture of Vicente, and it came over him that there might be the safest spot; for they say much of the old prison remains. Fortino, you do not believe it is haunted, and are not afraid of ghosts?"

"Not I," muttered he heavily, beginning to think.

"You have never been there?"

"No."

"Would you go, Fortino, if I wanted you to, and take me — me and Pepita?"

Pepa had so managed the affair of the day before that none of the directions to him or any other save Quiroz had come from her. She had been the unseen power. Hence Fortino had not definitely connected her with the treachery. But he did not like her.

"I don't want to take the other one," said he.

"Why?"

"Nothing. I don't like the other one."

"Well, but she wants to go. I do not know any reason why I should not want her to. You know—you know, Fortino, she and Vicente are—were lovers. It would be only right that she go."

She was smothering her own suspicions, trying to be good to Pepa in her own sorrow.

"Yes, I want you to take us both. You can get two other sailors. You can take my father and Anastasio."

"No," groaned he; "they taunted me."

"This was very wrong of them," she said thoughtfully. "Well, there are others. And we shall take food for three days, for we may not find him at once. I was once out five days, going from place to place with my father, and sleeping in the *canoa*; it was a good journey, and I liked it. We will go first to the island. If he is not there, we will go on across the lake, and learn where he is. Then, if they have taken him too far away, at least," and her voice broke, "we can go to Chapala and be at home. There is nothing to be done, Fortino, by staying here. You want to tell him that you are still faithful; that it was no fault of yours, only your faith. We will find him; even there may be some chance to rescue him, for you are very strong."

"I would break down the gates of Heaven to do that, Clarita," said he.

"Then you will come?"

"Si," he replied, arising with a mournful dignity, and seeming to the small girl very large indeed, "I will go. But the wind is wrong. I think we shall have to wait till night for a wind. It has changed since I sat here. The sky, the clouds, the very air are against me, wreck that I am."

"Then," said she, "we will go when the wind comes."

She thanked him fervently, and gave him her hand, and then, wrapping the gray *rebozo* about her head and shoulders, went on into the town. She went to Quiroz's house only to report to Pepa. She would not stay there. She went to an inn at the plaza, and remained in it all day.

Thus it chanced that, when a southern breeze sprang up toward six o'clock that evening, and the sun had lit his flames in the west, another *canoa* was poled down the river and sent out into the lake, where the white square of canvas caught the wind, and a journey was begun toward a barely visible speck of black in the distant middle of the great basin.

CHAPTER IV

THERE is but a vague idea among the inhabitants of the lake borders concerning the origin and the age of the ruins that are still to be seen on Prison Island, ruins which, by their massiveness, by their evidences of a complete and elaborate system, form a startling contrast to the simplicity of the life of the surrounding shores. One need only chance on that deserted spot in the middle of the lake to know that a powerful and civilized nation came and pushed its institutions into a primitive one.

The island is three-quarters of a mile long and less than a quarter of a mile wide in its widest part. At some parts the width is less than an eighth. It is curved round a small bay on the western side, the side toward Chapala and from which Chapala's towers are barely visible. It is a rocky and rugged piece of land, stern, unpromising. It rises more than one hundred feet above the water and its summit is somewhat flat. Its sides are steep and strewn with boulders. In places at the shore lie vast quantities of broken rocks heaped or strewn in chaos. The place has repelled men for many years. The prison is too gloomy, too stern. They thought it haunted.

There are a few large trees on the summit, but the most prevalent plant is the great, zigzag bush of the flat-leaved cactus that bears the juicy *tuna*.

These plants stand in thorny clusters that rise high in air and cover spaces of many square yards, defying penetration. They cling, too, down on the steep sides and drop red fruit into the waves. But they leave much of the summit bare. There are some wild goats leaping among the stones. Many a carrion-eating black bird of great size, being a kind of vulture, hovers about ruined wall or empty moat, or flaps a sluggish wing over the roofless cells.

Toward the northern end stand the ruins of a stone Catholic chapel. The roof lies broken on the floor. The naves are empty. The walls are discolored by time and let in the sunlight through yawning gaps. There is no altar, nor any pulpit, nor a vestige of priesthood, nor any memory of those that came in at the high arched door and knelt. There is a large open square near by whose surrounding walls, fifty yards in each direction, are mouldering and covered with herbage.

A full half mile away, at the southern end, the end toward Tizapan, are the remains of an edifice much larger and curious of construction. It was like two tunnels built above instead of under the ground, of stone, rising fifty feet in height, the tunnels parallel, divided only by a single wall that was common to both. There was no communication between them. There were no partitions. The tiny windows were thirty feet above the ground and the arched roofs let in no light. Each long passage measured twenty yards from end to end. Each might have held many prisoners and, thus occupied, even beneath the ground there could scarcely have been a more loathsome dungeon. The appearance of this building from without, is strange in the extreme. Its position, too, arrests attention. It is high on the

bluff over the water. The island at that end narrows and that section of it whereon the building stands is cut off from the rest by a deep moat that extends entirely across the land. The moat is now dry; the drawbridge is wanting. In one of the two high pillars that stand at the place of the bridge is an inscription stone. The inscription is chiselled away.

Between the church occupying the island's one end and the vaulted building occupying the other, and situated in the centre of the widest portion of the island, stands the largest edifice. It is nearer the vaulted one than the church. A space of some one hundred yards separates this prison from that of the tunnels. It is exceedingly large and square, being made of long rows of cells extending successively round the four sides of an inner open court. None of the cells has doors opening out to the unwallled island. Some of them have doors opening into the court. Others have not even these, nor any windows, only one narrow door leading into a second cell which, windowless, leads into a third, thence to a fourth. The fourth may open into the court. Thus there are series with but one entrance for each. The last of a series, with its door locked, must have been a hole of horrors to him who occupied it.

Nearly all the walls stand firm and strong, though blackened. The greater portion of the roofs has fallen in and lies in ruins. There is a reason for the intact condition of the walls. There is a place where it seems a prisoner has tried to dig his way out, which place shows the composition. He began with the plaster coating and came to a layer of brick. Doubtless he was overjoyed that it was brick instead of stone. After concealing his labor for some time, in peril of being shot, he came to a wall of solid

rock. The stones of it are exceedingly large. They are square cut, fitted with nicety. He failed to go further. If one starts boring in from outside he will come to brick also. So the real wall of stone is buried between walls of brick. The whole is two yards thick.

The court in the centre is forty yards square. It is wild looking, deserted. From without one low passage leads into it between cells. To reach that passage a deep moat must be crossed, a moat which surrounds the entire prison. It is now dry and the bridge is gone. In two corners of this edifice narrow spiral staircases rise to the summit of it, issuing in towers. These corners, time-stained, give the last touches to the mediæval air that is over the whole of the island. But the mediæval power is gone.

Farther toward the eastern shore there are ruins that are more completely ruins. Here must have been a building as large as that just described. But it was much older. Its walls are all down, rounded heaps like earthworks. Out of the summits of the heaps grow large trees. Again, between the square prison and the prison of tunnels, stands a lone tower, high and square, with stairs in it. Past this a paved road, doubtless convict made, leads from the one prison to the moat that cuts the island in two at the other, and continues beyond.

On the western side, the side of the bay, the side toward Chapala, the ascent, though steep, was such as to allow of the building of a winding roadway up. It is broad and well paved, the slow, slow work of many hands. One cannot see it without picturing to himself the lines of wretches that toiled in bondage up the long incline. At its foot by the bay are the remnants of a stone landing-place. Here is a spot

more nearly like a harbor than is any other of the shore. Here the *canoas*—the same in those old times that they are to-day—discharged their unhappy cargoes. At the landing, with its base beaten by the waves, is another lonely tower. It is Roman in appearance. It is massive, lifting a heavy dome.

To him who, in that olden time of tyranny, brought his enslaved Aztec body and his crushed Aztec soul to this spot, hope must have perished, and the day, though it were the fairest that the fair lake knew, been black. For, though he should penetrate the rock and cross the moat, though he should evade the sentries on wall and in tower, freedom yet would not be his till he should swim ten miles to Mescala on the north, or twenty to the south, there where Tizapan lies unseen under her peaks.

Before dawn of the day last spoken of there was the unwonted presence of two *canoas* in the little bay, sailing in lonely, disturbing the old solitude, being poled at length, sails down, to the ruins of the dock beside the tower. The wind was falling and the waves were gentle. The morning star was up in the east. The guide had done his duty, though with the lessening breeze there was no such need of him as the *jefe* had anticipated. Besides the anchors at the bows, ropes were run out of the sterns and tied at the tower's base. The tower itself rose gloomy, its dome cutting a half circle out of the sky. The rocky promontories of the island, too, shut out half the starry expanse. Men disembarked and stood about on the rocks, chilled by the place. It was new to them all save to the guide and the leader. The prisoner was brought to land, guarded. He, too, stood looking at the tower. He had said not a word since he entered the *canoa* with Bonavidas. He said

nothing now. He stood aloof, silent, the night hiding the expression of his face. When the men, the weapons, the ammunition, and the provisions were at length safely landed on the remnants of pier, the prisoner was heard to sigh heavily.

The guide, whose scarred face had been seen at times during the voyage by the light of a candle and had been observed to show signs of excitement, was on the point of landing. Rodrigo's voice sounded odd and loud, breaking on the silence:

"Keep to your vessel, friend," said he. "I shall not pay you by leaving you in this solitude. I promised to see you over. So I will. Bonavidas, have you chosen your men?"

"They are ready enough," was the reply.

"Take, then, this vessel. It is the fastest. The wind will not last you many hours more. So make for the nearest coast. Take this silent friend with you and give him his liberty when you arrive. Then you and your three companions get you to the governor as fast as any beasts you can steal or buy or borrow can travel thither. Give him first the letter, and in the name of haste get an answer from him at once and bring it, that I may know my next step. And remember this, as I have told you: If there is to be any delay, if I am to hold this desert spot so much as a day after your return, he is to send me a cannon or two to do it with. Go on and make haste."

The mute was crouched on the stern of the vessel. He hesitated. He felt Rodrigo's hand on his shoulder and suddenly flashed eyes at the *jefe* that were luminous in the darkness.

"Thank you friend," said the *jefe*, "and farewell."

The mute descended within, went creeping to the bow, and lay down there, where it was black, on the

boat's bottom under an unused sail. Bonavidas and three others entered likewise. The boat glided out impelled by poles. It lay for a moment rocking yonder on the waves. Then the canvas went up and caught the breeze. With the four soldiers in the stern and the mute in the bow, the vessel began its journey in the first of the dawn.

None of those left behind spoke. The march up the old winding roadway of cobblestones began, Vicente, strong and elastic of step, leading the way. He seemed to hasten to this new condition as though it were part of his own necessary course. The steep way led between walls of rock and clusters of cacti. They issued at length on the island's top under certain trees, and the lake and the round tower were far below. Under these trees, they halted him and, a guard being left, Rodrigo and some others went away and disappeared. They were gone an hour, during which it grew lighter, during which, also, the prisoner stood, seemingly unseeing, and looked at the east where the sun would rise out of the water. When at last the *jefe* returned there was red in the sky and the clear freshness of a new day in the air. Rodrigo had examined the island from end to end. He knew his course. He was, too, sick at heart.

"Come," said he to Vicente, constrainedly. "I must plunge into it as into cold water, and have it done. If you knew half the bitterness this business causes me, we might yet be friends."

Vicente turned his eyes on the speaker.

"Why, we are sufficiently so," said he. "We follow different laws, that is all. At least you are a man. There be some that are not men."

The *jefe* was startled to see the other's one unbandaged hand held out to him. He took it in

silence and turned, and Vicente followed. They went to that great square prison, across whose moat at the only opening the soldiers had dragged the trunk of a tree. When the prisoner finally entered and felt the presence of the walls about him, the sun was rising and burnishing the lake and a track of yellow gold led across the water straight into its great eye.

He was taken through the stone passage and into the open court. Its floor was covered with weeds, shrubs, and cacti. Among these the party went, crossing to the western wall. On this side there was one of those series of cells already mentioned, whereof a single cell only gave exit into the court. The second opened only into the first. It had a small, deep-barred window. The third led into the second and the fourth into the third. These two last had no other doors nor any windows. They had been dungeons.

The innermost of the four, that one most dungeon-like, was still roofed. It was situated in the far south-east corner of the ruins. To pass from it through the three others, and thence to the only exit, one must traverse a distance of some thirty yards, for the cells were long. The partition between it and the third was intact and the open doorway very narrow. Between the third and the second were the rotten remnants of a heavy wooden door strengthened by iron bands. The second cell was roofless and the partition between it and the first was partially down. The exit into the court was another narrow doorway with no door. Guards at this passage were thus in command of the four cells.

They put him in that series, and some soldiers took their stand at the entrance. Rodrigo, eager to be away from a spot that was loathsome to him, took

the rest of his men to the shore again, whence the provisions were to be carried to the summit. Those provisions were, for the most part, of that very store that Fortino and Anastasio had seen to the gathering of in Tizapan. They were, in the main, taken to the ruins of the church. It was there Rodrigo made his quarters. He would not stay longer than need be in the prison. The church was cleaned, fuel was collected, duties were assigned, and the wait for the governor's orders was begun,—a wait that, to him who was master of the spot, who loved freedom and deeds and action, was nevertheless a wait of unalloyed misery, the hours of which were depressing weeks.

"Pray God I may receive orders to-morrow," said he, "and that I be not forced to the worst."

Vicente had walked into his prison with his never-absent, unmoved calmness, whatever else his face bespoke. They asked him where he wished his bed. He traversed the first and second cells, looking at their desolation. He pushed open the rotten door to the third, and the hinges grated echoingly. He traversed the third and the fourth. The last was darkest and most depressing, but its floor was intact. He desired, said he, to sleep there. So the place was cleaned as well as could be. It was paved with large square stones. Blankets were brought and put in the farthest corner, according to his directions, and a candle was placed beside them. He was left alone.

He strode slowly back and forth for hours from the southern end of the innermost cell to the northern end of that which gave exit to the court where the guards sat. At one o'clock they brought him something to eat, as they had done at nine. All the afternoon he stood in the second cell at the barred window, looking out over the weed-choked *patio*. At

night, having eaten, he shut himself up in the rear cells.

He did not sleep. The hours went by, passed by him in unhappy thought. And it was characteristic of his unsullied nature and the strong and faithful clinging to his one purpose, that not his failure or his danger was the cause of bitterest grief to him, but rather the sorrowful fact of the treachery that had brought them about. He tried to put the memory of that away. He wished, finally, that his wounded head and shoulder might pain him more poignantly, that he might thus be unable to think. But the treachery was yet uppermost. There was one subject of thought, however, that finally banished even that.

As he had neared the island a burst of light had come over his brain. He had watched the course of the vessel with unseen intensity of interest. There were other things meant by that heavy sigh which escaped him on the pier than mere sadness. It meant, too, relief of what had been nearly excitement. When he had risen to the island's summit he had scanned every rock, though he had seemed to see nothing. Arrived at that summit it was not the coming day alone that he saw. Entering his prison he had strained his powers of recollection. He had not, however, been gratified. He had seen nothing that he remembered. But his situation, he felt, was nevertheless strange and incongruous. The possibilities of it filled him with an unreasoning anticipation. When the sun at length rose, therefore, and he came, after a sleepless night, and looked, hollow-eyed, through the bars into the desolate court, it was not on a day altogether without hope that he gazed, nor on walls that meant nothing but imprisonment. Yet having gazed thus at certain black wings that drooped over a turret

opposite, he sighed again, a sigh of pain, and turned and paced among the ruins.

"Fool," said he; "fool you are and have ever been. Now that your dream is wrecked, you would look for miracles to spring from the ruins of a prison."

That day also passed without incident. And the second night, to be nearly as sleepless as the first, closed in.

Meanwhile the vessel in which Bonavidas was hastening his message to Guadalajara and on which Vicente's destiny hung, had rounded, in that first dawn, the rocks that mark the bay's eastern arm, and made for Mescala. It was still nearly dark when the last of the island's coasts was left behind. Just after passing that last headland, a spot where bold rocks stood out of the water and the land was broken with stony confusion, the four soldiers being at that time in the boat's stern and the sail somewhat hiding the bow, one of the four believed that he heard a splash in the water to the front.

"What was that?" said he, leaning over the side. "There was a noise in the water."

The others leaned and looked also. It was too dark to see.

"I did n't hear anything, nor you either," said Bonavidas, coughing dryly and spitting up something, which result of the cough he did not make manifest to his comrades. He turned, then, deathly pale, but smiling his same uncanny smile.

"I, too, heard it," said the third soldier, who was at the rudder.

"And I," said the fourth, "but it was only a fish. They say the *vagres* jump out of the water so, and I have seen a *vagre* five feet long."

"It is not so," answered the first. "*Vagres* never jump out of the water."

"*Vagres*, I tell you, jump most astonishingly high."

"Children," said Bonavidas, "the argument is purposeless. Jump or no jump, what odds? Call it a mermaid; mermaids are prettier than *vagres*."

The discussion was dropped. The breeze continued light. There was fear lest it should die before bringing them to shore. The high blue saw of the mountains seemed to grow higher and nearer with exasperating slowness. Day came and the yellow sun; the lake was a mass of flashing ripples. When the vessel stood half-way between the tiny and distant island and the vast and distant mountains of the shore, one of the soldiers left the stern, where he had been playing cards with a companion, and, stooping under the thatch, went to the bow.

"How is our freight, — the mute?" called one from the stern.

"I don't see him," said the other.

"He is under the sail."

"He is not under the sail."

"I tell you he hid himself under the sail."

"If you can see fish where there are none, you may see him under it, then. I tell you, friend, there is nothing under the sail."

The two who were not at the rudder followed to the bow. The sail was thrown aside and lay flat on the floor. There was no possible place in a vessel like this to hide. The bow was empty. The soldiers gazed at one another.

"Well, may Moses comfort me!" ejaculated Bonavidas.

"He has slid over the side in the dark and dived yonder by the island," said the fourth soldier.

"*Sí, señor*," said the first. "That was your *vagre*."

CHAPTER V

RODRIGO determined that the night watches should not be left entirely to inferiors. Uncongenial as the whole task had grown to be, he would yet watch all points himself. He inaugurated the custom of making in person at least three slow circuits of the entire island each night. Thus would there be less possibility of a fleet's surprising him.

It was still dark on the morning of that second day, and he had but just returned to the church from his last inspection of his guards, when one of the latter came to him. A *canoa*, said the soldier, had anchored off the southern point. The *jefe* arose and, following the guard, went and looked at the ghost-like vessel, which could scarcely be seen lying on the waves. Some intuition, born of a new interest in his life, or perhaps his knowledge of her nature, turned his thoughts at once to Clarita. Moody, dark of mind, he gave orders that the vessel be watched, and returned to the church. He lay down and passed sleepless hours till day.

"The 'little one,'" he muttered. "She would go into the great abyss to find him."

At daylight, the waves being smaller, the mysterious *canoa* was poled into the bay. Rodrigo had doggedly refrained from watching its arrival. He had remained at the church, receiving word of its movements. He mastered his own perversity at length and came to the island's upper edge. The vessel

lay there at the ruins of pier with the ripples lapping its sides. There was a sailor sitting on its stern eating a *tortilla*. There was another doing something with a sail. If there was any one under the thatch, the thatch of course hid him.

Rodrigo observed these things at a glance; but they took none of his attention. His eyes were nearer. She was there, the little one, toiling slowly up the long ascent of old cobblestone roadway, a cactus or a boulder now hiding her, for she was very small, so far down there. The gray *rebozo* was over her head and shoulders, and the hair was hid from the light of the morning. Strange as her coming was, perhaps her companion seemed stranger yet, merely that so great and rough a man should be her companion. For Fortino was climbing up, too, by her side, Fortino the huge, with a demeanor of deep seriousness, of depression. His sombrero seemed exceedingly high. His white peon shirt and his loose white trousers were a trifle soiled and his sandals a trifle worn. Round his waist was the blue sash, still brilliant. He was assisting her, holding her arm in a stiff and unwonted gallantry.

The *jefe* sighed and turned back. He entered the church and sat down on a heap of the fallen roof with his back to the door. After a time the new-comers had reached the summit, for he heard her high voice asking for him.

"We will go, if you please, señor, to Don Rodrigo."

A soldier came into the church.

"Shall I bring them in here?"

"Yes," said the *jefe*.

The ruins seemed stern to her, inspiring her with awe; and she shuddered at the birds, though she was not conscious of seeing them. The doorway of the church was large and she and Fortino turned to it.

The giant stood stolidly staring at the back of Rodrigo, who had arisen yonder at the altar place.

"Don Rodrigo," said she timidly.

He turned and looked at them. Her first impression, and it was a startling one, was that Rodrigo looked older than she had thought him. He forced himself into a strained cordiality, white and serious of face. He came across the floor among bricks, stone, and mortar. He held out his hand.

"Come in — at least we can be equal in a church. Fortino, my friend, you have brought this girl to a dreary place."

"Señor," said Fortino, standing glaring at Rodrigo with bloodshot eyes and speaking with despair, "you may be a brave man, but I am no friend of yours. I am not anybody's friend. Damn me, he who takes Fortino for a friend is cursed."

"At least come in," said Rodrigo, and they followed him toward the place of the altar, a movement rather of nervousness than of purpose — for the sky was the roof wherever they went.

"Don Rodrigo," said Clarita, turning her eyes on him and letting the *rebozo* fall to her shoulders as she stood, like a figure in some gray stone, before him, "is Vicente here?"

"He is here, little one," said he. "He is in the prison over there."

Whereat her eyes filled with tears, though she did not hesitate, but spoke as before.

"I have brought Fortino, señor, because we thought he might be here, and if he had not been, we should have gone home. Don Rodrigo, it was Fortino who put up the chain. But Fortino is not a traitor; he did not mean it. Fortino is loyal and very good. He was told that it was you he was to stop. You

will not think less of Fortino because he would have injured you, for you know he was on the other side. And when he found they had deceived him, he was very ill, and it weighs on him very much. And I was — I was — sorry for him, for it weighed on him so. I saw he was — he was not what Vicente might think him; and I said — I said I would bring him —” she faltered and looked at the big Fortino — “I would bring him here, and, if Vicente were here, I knew you would let him talk to him, so that he can tell Vicente that he did not mean it. This will be a great happiness to Fortino. This is — this is why I brought him, Don Rodrigo.”

Rodrigo was awed into silence by the simplicity of that wonderful statement; nor did it strike him as incongruous, this small girl's bringing of this giant over the water. He stood and looked at her as she gazed anxiously up at him. She seemed to him beautiful.

“Little girl,” sighed he at last, “if any man could refuse you this — alas! he would be no more a man. I think I read that you came, too, because, as at other times, you could not stay away. You too wish to see him?”

“Is he comfortable, señor, and is he where he can have a little room and light and food, and where he can sleep?”

“It is the best I could do, Clarita. He has all these things.”

She stood in strained silence for a time.

“Can I stay here in the church?” asked she.

“Why — it is a dreary and a hard place.”

“It will do. Fortino can bring food from the boat and watch at the door.”

“God pity me!” cried Rodrigo. “You too, then, wish to stay!”

"I do not want to go away, señor," said she.

"But how will you sleep — how will you live?"

He knew there was a quick fire born in him and that his heart was not all eagerness that she should go away.

"Have you forgotten, señor, that we are very poor here by the lake and the houses are little, and that I have slept all my life on the ground? I will stay. I cannot go away. I could sleep, señor, if I must, on the rocks outside."

"You may have the church, Clarita," said he, sadly; "and I think the Virgin will forget that it is ruins and come."

"I knew if you were here," said she, "you would be good to me. I am not afraid."

"I shall take this friend now," said the *jefe*, "to Vicente. And you — though I dread it — you too will come?"

"No. I will not come. And I believe I do not want him to know that I am here. You will tell your men that Vicente is not to know. Fortino, you are not to tell him that I am with you. For if he needs me, Don Rodrigo, I know you will come and tell me. I do not want him to know, for it would add to his unhappiness. He would be afraid for me."

The two went out, Rodrigo leading, and Fortino following silently in a perspiration but without any of the customary flames in his face. She came to the door, wrapping the *rebozo* round her head, and sat down on a stone and watched them go, her eyes full of her love and her wretchedness. She had made a sacrifice that one should not try to measure when she decided she should not go also. When she saw the two arrive at the prison she cried in her heart:

"I, too, wish much to see him!"

They felt it necessary at the prison to search Fortino. They found nothing. Rodrigo ordered one of the guards to accompany the fisherman and be present at the interview. He himself returned to the church. The girl had gone inside. She was standing by the far wall, wrapped in thought, and he came near her.

"Señor," she said with emotion, and put out her hand with a little impulsive movement that was new to him, "I wish to tell you again that I know that in your heart you are not any enemy to us, only that you were on the side that you thought right. I say this because I can see that you are oppressed and are sorry for me, and because I must thank you again for being as kind to him as you can be — and to me."

He took the hand a moment.

"Have I been kind to you, Clarita? It seems to me I have been only cruel."

"You are kind, indeed you are kind!" she said, eagerly, frankly, with the tenderness that made her greatly fear to hurt any one.

He had her sit down on a smooth stone where of old priests had chanted. He himself sat down a little way from her.

"You could not stay away," he said, turning his brown eyes and knitted brow toward her, speaking musingly.

"No."

"You would have come had it been the sea instead of the lake."

"I do not know," said she, "for the sea is very wide. I should have wanted to try."

He was silent a long while. He was borne away on a stream of strong deep thought and emotion.

"Clarita," he said, after a time, "I am lost again in wonder at your faithfulness. You do not know how different you are — you never saw the world. If it had half of your steadfastness it would be the world no longer. There are books in my country that are full of stories of Mexican faithlessness. It is a habit, and a bad and constant one, to call your people faithless. The opinion is prated much, and believed much. I even had it myself. Well, I have seen Mexican treachery. There are villains here — there are villains everywhere. But there are true ones too. I have seen a faith, a strength of soul, on the lake's border such as I never knew in any other part of the wide world. Let my nation plume itself no more on honesty. I think there are many at its very head who could learn the art of life from you."

"Señor, you rate me very much too high. I do not want you to think thus of me. Tell me something about your life before you came here. It must have been sad."

She said it with so much tenderness that he was drawn out of himself. He had come to that time when a man would throw himself away to empty his heart.

"A part of it was bitter, little one. How could you understand that another woman was untrue?"

"I have seen women," said she, thinking of Pepa, "of whom I was afraid."

She arose and came and sat nearer, a very natural movement.

"Tell me," said she.

He waited some minutes.

"I lived in a city," he began, "in the east, and my father was a man of wealth. I was a little wild

of spirit, Clarita, and I went away from home and travelled over the west. In a western city I met a girl with whom I thought I fell in love. Well — it is like so many other stories. There is no need to tell it all. She was beautiful — or I thought she was. I think it was her eyes that won me — large gray eyes. I gave her everything, my heart and my faith. I believed in her as though she were myself. All my life I had seen the worship of money and hated it. Because I had some wealth I had seen the falseness of many friends. Well, at the deepest moment I saw hers also. That is all, little girl. There is no romance in this, just dull bitterness. She may have thought she cared for me. It was really the money; for she went away and married some one else who had more of it. This turned me against everything. I was always extreme in my acts and feelings. I thought for a time that every one was false. So I wanted to go away and bury myself. I came down here, for I knew it was a country different and full of solitudes as well as of turmoil. That was eight years ago. I was sad nearly all of the time; I could not forget her. I was glad to be with another race and learn another language. At last I knew she was unworthy of so much sorrow, and I became more careless. I have led a pointless, purposeless life. I had come to Guadalajara in a sudden new spirit of action. I wanted to fight. I joined the little army there and in some troubles some of the city's gendarmes were killed. So they policed many of the streets for a long time with soldiers. This is how I chanced to be a gendarme for a time. Then one day there came into my life a strange little Mexican child with a blue *rebozo* over her head."

She said nothing for a long time, looking at the ruins scattered on the floor; there was the flush of pink slightly in her face, but the dimples were no more there, for in these days she did not smile.

"I am sorry," said she at last, haltingly, and paused for another silence. She added after a time:

"Was she very beautiful, this other woman?"

"She seemed so once."

"Was she — was she — very white?"

"Yes, she was very white."

Clarita drew the *rebozo* more closely about her and sighed.

"And she was tall, too," she said after a time; "tall and white and — different. Ah, no wonder you loved her!"

"Clarita!" cried he, "to be tall and white is nothing! I could love these things no more. Don't you know, don't you know, strange dream-child that you are, what alone it is that I could come to love?"

"Then," said she, turning a little away, "if it was not right for you to care for the other, perhaps God had a purpose in all of it."

"I have denied it many times," said he. "There was no purpose for me, no thread to follow out. I seemed drifting. I said to myself, there was under my life none of that power of fate that is the source of the deeds of other men. But I was wrong. Alas! I might have known it, seven years ago, for even then, once, I felt the stream that was bearing me. And now — now I am blind no longer."

"I too," she said falteringly, trembling, not daring to look at him, "have felt thus. Tell me more of that other girl you love. I know you are very sorry she was not good, and I — I too am sorry."

"Clarita!" he said arising, "I am sorry no more.

I wanted to tell you what it is that I could love — faith, truth. The peace that I wished to find in the world when I came away, did not satisfy me. It must be in a person, in a woman. And at last I came here; and I found that the beauty of this place had embodied itself in a girl; and the fact came over me with such depth of knowledge and such sweetness of emotion that at first it was as though it had been with me always. Clarita, by this very confession I am lost. My miserable state is this: That I have found my first love was not love but shallowness, that, having grown older, love, the true, the living, has come to me. In this I am haunted and crushed by the knowledge that I am bound to a course that is anguish to her I love, may be worse than anguish."

She had arisen in deep emotion, and had walked away toward the church's far corner, whither he followed her. There were hewn stones, broken, lying at her feet, and the wall was damp and black. She put her arms up on it, and leaned her face against them, burying it, and stood, her breast heaving.

"I have not dared to ask before," she said, her voice coming unsteadily, "but you must tell me. What are you going — what will be done with — him?"

He sat down on a stone and held his head in his hands.

"You would not demand of me that I free him, after — after all that happened — and be called a traitor."

She lifted her face from the *rebozo* and looked at him, and a great burst of pity came from her, so that she started to him, but turned back and buried her face again against the wall as though she were a very little child.

"Oh, it is not mine to demand!" she said. "I am not anything — I cannot — I cannot!"

"Clarita," he replied, "it is yours, and yours only. For I am powerless. You think yourself weak. You have in you the power that is greatest and strongest of all earth's powers. And because I trust you — because I love you — I would believe that whatever you did or said was right. I do honestly think that if you told me I did wrong to keep your brother, and asked me to let him free, I should walk now to the prison and open the door, though I ruined my life by doing it. Speak, little one — the moment is yours."

She looked at him fearfully. He had not raised his head. She was holding her breath. Her *rebozo* had fallen again to her shoulders, and the flood of hair was unbound. Her face seemed almost pure white in the light from the gaping roof; every drop of blood forsook it. There was absolute silence for many seconds. Her brain began to burn with mad thoughts. She closed her eyes. She raised her small hand above her head, and grasped at the damp stones. There came, then, from the walls of the prison, the clear soft notes of a dove, that inimitable sound that carried in it all nature, all beauty, the very meaning of the morning. And the sunlight, pouring through the open roof, was coming slowly down the western wall.

She gasped and cleared her brain, and her old self came back.

"I cannot — O Holy Mother! — I cannot!" cried she. "Don Rodrigo, I could not wish you to do this."

"I knew," said he, "that you could not."

"What will happen to him, Don Rodrigo?"

"It is beyond my power to decide," he replied.

"I have sent a message to the governor, and the answer could not come, at earliest, before to-night. It must be as the governor says."

Strangely enough, she had never thought of the worst. She did not think of it now; she dreamed only of some possible prison where she could come, at least, and sit sometimes outside the door.

"Clarita," and he arose again and came near, "you cannot love me. I would not dare to ask it. I am a monster to you. But, hopeless as it is, and bound as I am, I will open my heart once for all. I love you as I never could love any other being. I shall love you till I die."

She sobbed.

"And the other," murmured she, "she who was tall and white. O Don Rodrigo! you are blind, you do not know — for Clarita is little, Clarita is ignorant. In your own land they call us savages. That we can be true — this is all we have, and this, to your people, is nothing. Ask of your heart, and do not trust it, but go away when all this pain is ended, and forget me, or remember me only as the little brown one who merely knew to follow Vicente, and stay by the prison where he is —"

He could endure no more. Against his will he seized her in his arms and held her.

"There is another still," she sobbed, "for I have not been blind — Pepa is here!"

He let her from him. He was suddenly cold. His face lost color. The remorse swept back on him.

"Where?" said he.

"In the boat."

"Why did she, too, not come here?"

"She would not." Clarita was burying her face again. "She sulked in the *canoa*."

After some time of silence he shook off the depression Pepa's name had caused.

"You yourself must know," said he, "that there can be nothing between me and this woman. God pity her — I never loved her."

"But she loves you."

"For which," he replied, biting his lip, "Heaven be merciful to her. I cannot speak of these, these who are nothing to me. I can think only of you. Yet am I a monster to you; tell me it is so. Even thus your voice must have some soothing quality in it."

She broke down and sank to the ground. He sprang to her, unable to restrain himself. He kneeled and held her with his arms round her shoulders and her head against his breast.

"Then tell me only this," he said. "If, when this horror is done, there be at last, by some impossible chance, a way that leaves me free and makes me not the cause of your greater grief — could you then, oh my heart! come to tell me that you loved me?"

She was shaking against his breast, weeping. She did not struggle; she rested there a brief moment. In that moment they were united, as truly as though the old days of that old chapel had come back and the priests were there and the boys in white swung censers that cast sweet fragrance to the vaulted roof. But she did not admit it. Her sobs ceased and her grief came back, and the fear of the future. She arose as though frightened, wrapping the *rebozo* round her.

"Oh! I cannot tell!" she cried. "We must wait. I cannot speak — I cannot think —"

She went away, out of the church, and nearly all that day she sat on the rocks in the most solitary

part of the island, where the autumn sun found light in her auburn locks and the water below her glistened.

Fortino, too, that great and wretched giant was seated on the rocks; but on those just outside the central prison door. Fortino had not entered. When they had searched him before allowing him to cross the moat, he had stood and looked at the moat itself, at the walls, at all the gloomy, depressing place. Then they had told him he could enter.

"Is he in there?" asked Fortino hoarsely.

"Yes."

He could not realize it.

"He is in this — this hell?" muttered he.

They assured him Vicente was within.

He stood like a monolith for many minutes and stared in tragedy of spirit into the place.

"Here!" he said in a smothered growl of grief. "In this — in this! And I, I did it!"

They were in much wonder, watching him. His face suddenly blazed red and he turned red eyes on them.

"No!" he cried, "not yet! I cannot yet enter here. Let my damned soul first grow to it!"

He backed off some twenty yards and sat down on a rock and stared at the prison's door for eleven miserable hours without food or drink, without uttering a word or moving his eyes. The noon beat down heat on him. The afternoon cast his shadow longer and longer on the stony earth. The evening breeze came and cooled some of the hot sweat from his face. The sun went down in a sea of red light, and the night came. They had given Vicente his supper and the prisoner had retired to the last of the four cells, when Fortino finally arose.

"Perhaps I can do it now," said he.

They led him across the moat and through the passage into the *patio*, thence to the door of the first cell. He fixed his eyes ahead of him. He strove with prodigious effort not to see any of the ruins. He halted in a profound revery at the door.

"Come in," said the guard who was to accompany him, "and follow me."

He started, awakened, and plunged into the first cell after his leader. The latter held a torch which cast flickering light through the apartments, so that shadows and flames seemed leaping and sporting among the ruins like ghosts. Fortino held his breath and, suffused with misery, stumbled into the second cell. The guard pointed to the door. Fortino put his hand on it, and it creaked and swung open. He entered, followed by the other, and it emitted a dull sound as it closed after them. Into the third cell from the fourth came the dim light of Vicente's candle. The huge man paused and feared to enter. He came to the door and stumbled on a stone, and suddenly burst out in a thunderous oath.

"What is it, man?" said a calm voice in the fourth cell. "Come in. Defile not your mouth with blasphemies. There are others more unhappy than you, whoever you be."

Fortino came and stood at the door and looked. The guard was with him. Vicente was seated on the blankets with the light on the floor before him. He was not looking at the door, he was looking into the flame of the candle. His face's profile was turned toward Fortino and the light cut it out of the gloom as out of rock. It held a peace in its sadness. Fortino could not go further. He stood and gazed. The prolonged silence led Vicente to turn his head

He had thought it only a guard. He saw the unmistakable great form. He arose and stood as still as the other, and fastened a deep eye on the giant.

"Well," he began, "this is Fortino. This is he who fished and fought. Thus far would my memory go. I will say to myself and mayhap come to believe, that after Ocotlan Fortino died. Yes, this belief will I carry to my grave. It will be more satisfying. Then are you, man, who come where I am a prisoner and stand in the door of my cell at night, the ghost of that old Fortino who fished and fought and died, and was a friend to me? Or are you that other man who wielded your strength when you were dead?"

"Oh, Body of God!" cried the great one, coming a little nearer. "You, then, too, curse me with it! For which, hear the old lime-kiln say, I blame you not — rather would bless you for it! What did I do? I came across the lake to find you. Why? To enter your prison, wherever in Purgatory it might be! What has the day been to me? I sat through it all outside the door with hell-fire in me, because I dared not come in. I have now come in. Why? That you may trample, if you so desire, my swine's body under your feet, or cut my cursed flesh in strips. I am a madman, an animal, a fool. I am any one, or all of these things, or any other such as have not reason or responsibility or blame. But one thing I am not, so help me or so slay my soul whatever gods there be or mothers or sons of gods or eternal damnations — I am not a traitor! What did they tell me? That I was doing it for you. I did sweat blood with that great hope. I did pour out my soul drop by drop while the iron was heating. Who conceived the deed? I — and my soul is already with the devil

for it. Who put me at it and told me you were waiting in the plaza and your enemy was galloping up the river road? Who but that son of the damned, Quiroz, who beat me on the back and made me a maniac? Señor, I am done; I say no more. I blame you not. You were deeply wronged and your greatness is ruined. Hate me — *si*, hate me! I long to be loathed — already am I damned. I shall carry away with me a never dead faith in you. I shall want and need no reconciliation or soothing from you. I shall tramp out. Would that my big hulk could shake down these walls! May nobody ever remember this bungling giant! Good-by, sir!”

He turned about, having been in his speech like some awful engine, and made for the door.

“Stop!” cried Vicente. He came to the other with quick steps and laid his hand on his shoulder.

“What do you want?” growled Fortino in hoarseness.

“To tell you, Fortino, that I am as ready to see that I judged you wrongly as you were to help me. Then this great form has in it a heart as great; and this is what I had believed of you. Why, man, there is a relief comes to me with this news, that, compared to my grief before, is like happiness. Forgive me my bad thoughts. I am grown morbid. I seem to have been, too, peculiarly blind. Nothing but the sight of you yourself in the midst of the treachery could have made me doubt you. Tell me not, man, to forget you. Call me rather a friend who shall never forget. You come in the darkest hour when the world seemed rotten and traitors the inhabitants of it. You walk in on my loneliness and my despair, and prove to me that honesty still lives. Fortino, when you can measure the worth of this to me, you

can measure your own good and come to perceive that you have undone the mistake you made."

The perspiration again rolled down Fortino's countenance.

"But the mistake got you in," muttered he, glaring about at the walls, "and the good will not get you out."

Vicente led him to the light. Fortino's desire to go was overcome. The two sat down on the stone floor with the candle between them casting its white light up over the clear strong features of the dreamer and over the coarse visage of the giant, whereon the sweat glistened in beads. They talked thus for a long time, the presence of the guard not hindering them. And when at last, more than an hour later, they separated, it was a somewhat soothed yet rather a broken old giant that came out, crossed the stony space to the church and, blocking its wide doorway with his form, slept.

CHAPTER VI

NEARLY all morning Josefa Aranja remained under the thatch of the *canoa*. She sat on a rude chair that was on the boat's bottom. She held her head on her hand, and her eyes were fixed on the ends of the rafters where they came down over the sides and the thatch let in light by chinks. There were no sighs from her; neither did her face bespeak any grief. But it was a face extremely intense with other expressions. She saw little, planning to see little. Of such things as there were to hear, she heard all.

She arose and walked back and forth over the space of two or three steps under the thatch, without coming out from either end of it. She stretched her arms up over her head for exercise and dug her fingers into that soft roof, and presently pulled out handfuls of it and threw the material on the floor. She laughed to herself. She frowned. She sat down again and waited. She arose and came out from under the roof and was in that part of the vessel which was farthest away from land, the bow. She had her back to the island and, leaning over the anchor chain, gazed dreamily away across the lake to Chapala's pigmy towers. She gazed thus for more than half an hour, and the breeze blew over her face. She still heard everything and the face was as intense as before. She sang a little after a time, softly to herself or to the ripples; which ripples lapped and kissed under her face and were singing a

song like hers, being old ripples round an old island which they lapped and kissed when Quetzalcoatl was here in truth.

“ When Quetzalcoatl bade the tribes farewell
The fog lay thick and gray o’er all the sea.
The tide crept on o’er sinking rock and shell
And sluggish waves beat slow and ceaselessly.
On the enchanted ground
Gathered they trembling round,
Where, in that god-made, glistening boat stood he ! ”

Having sung all the song, slowly, softly, not thinking of it, she suddenly turned her head with a quick furtive movement and scanned in one sweeping glance the whole of the island, her eyes piercing and deep and her face flushed. There was a soldier or two whom she did not know, high up on the summit. There was another carrying a bag of something up the steep road. At the tower by her boat two others were doing something with provisions that as yet had not been removed to the top. One of the sailors of the *canoa* in which she had come (Fortino had engaged the two in Tizapan, strangers to him) was seated yonder on the rocks at the shore, still eating *tortillas*. The other was here, by the boat. There was nothing else to be seen, save rocks and cacti, sky and lake. A frown gathered on her forehead. She pressed her teeth tightly together and turned away to the water. Then she sang again and at length flashed her old smile suddenly at nothing.

“ He will come,” said she.

She waited another hour. No one came. She frowned then again, blackly, and went in under the thatch, where she sat down and stayed as still as rev-
ery itself, resting her head on her hand and looking

at the chinks of light. She was, in her heart, restless in the extreme. She was too wild for much waiting. It was possible they had not told him, yet she would hurt herself in the perverse way of love by believing that he knew she was there. She wanted to leap out and range that rocky spot and be, with her life and her smile, mistress of it. But she stayed doggedly in the boat. She would not go out, not she, if she sat there till she died — at least thus she thought for a time. But Pepa's thoughts and purposes seemed ever born of her blood, not of her brain. And blood flows in varying ways.

Rodrigo above, thought of her during that day, in spite of his new great thoughts of another. He even felt a pity for her; for which she would have given him no thanks. She would have preferred that he feel simply cold, which at times he did. He set his teeth and his will. What had he to do with this woman? He was then weighed suddenly with remorse; for he was the cause, though not willingly, of her treachery. He struggled long between a stern will against seeing her and some half morbid belief that he owed her at least a meeting and a little recognition. But the latter would be useless, absolutely without point. Better let it stand as it was; he could do nothing for her. Yet the half morbid idea lived.

A small, material, prosaic fact decided the matter. At four of the afternoon, when all the other hours since the morning's middle had been passed in a hard, stern silence by him, and in a half sullen burying of herself by her, it chanced that, whether he would or not, he had to descend to the ruins of the pier and the tower to examine and give directions concerning the last of such cargo as his two vessels had brought. Possibly the half morbid idea had

some weight in leading him down. But that idea died as he went; and he was as silent and as stern descending as he had been above.

There lay the bungling old vessel under him with the round tower standing, black, near it. The face of the bay was moving from north to south with the never progressive movement of countless small waves. He looked only once at the boat, while he wound his way down; after that he saw it no more. At the bottom he strode across the space artificially flattened by old-time convicts, and came upon the rock whereon stood the tower, entering it like a gloomy and haunted one, instead of with his natural lightness of step. But a fierce power emanated from him and he examined the bags of food and ordered his two men up with them in a tone that was new. Each took a load and departed, climbing the steep. Rodrigo remained in the tower till they should return, feeling himself foolishly exasperated at doing so. He went and sat down in the high arched southern doorway.

This tower has been called round. Such is the first effect on the eye. It is really octagonal, of thick stone walls. In each of four of the eight sides is a very large entrance, arched and leaving a good third of the octagon open to the airs of the lake. There are mediæval looking slits in the other four sides. The roof is round indeed, being the half of a sphere, with no pillars. The rock on which this edifice stands is just large enough for it, and juts into the lake; so that the doorway wherein Rodrigo sat was over the water. Whereas this was the southern door it was the northern one opposite and behind him that gave view to the vessel lying a few yards distant. As always, the occupant of that vessel had heard all that

there was to hear. Rodrigo was sitting staring at the water when a girl in a red dress came and looked in at the door behind him. She caught her breath, raised her hands, and put them up on either side of the doorway and stood. She bit her lip. She flushed hot and was immediately pale. Rodrigo did not move. She sighed a soft gentle sigh. Rodrigo continued staring at the lake. She disappeared, then, simply stepping a little to the west and, with the wall between her and him, stood on the rock's narrow ledge over the waves.

The two soldiers were returning. They entered, and the *jefe* told them where to put the rest of such things as were to be taken up. The two gathered up the last of the cargo and went away with it. The tower's floor was as bare as its time-eaten walls. Rodrigo had arisen, and was standing in the middle of it. There came the soft, dreamy notes of a little song from outside, sung as to one's self, carelessly, as might sing a maiden sewing in her room or wreathing cherry blossoms idly.

“In such fair bark did Quetzalcoatl go,
Watching his people on the lessening shore.
And were they human eyes that watched them so?
His face, his form, a god's resembled more!
White robes clung round his frame
Lit like a winding flame—
While all the winds went dancing on before!”

He was transfixed. The song floated in so gently, so purely. He could see the black-hulled vessel lying a little below him, with its mast rising, slim and naked, as high as his head. He set his jaws hard. He would not go to her; he would stride away. But it was too late. She had taken a step, a careless, idle one. It chanced to bring her to the

ledge of rocks just outside the door. She was indeed wreathing something as she sang, some kind of green branch with white flowers, whereon her eyes were fastened. She halted in beautiful unconsciousness, with the door framing her complete, slender figure, the water and the vessel and the rocks for a background; and very far away were Chapala's two white spires. Her profile was toward him. The color on her cheek was delicate, a light flush alternating with the clear white-brown of the lighter Mexicans. She was bareheaded and her shining black hair was smoothed back and braided to her waist.

She turned her head a little, wreathing the flowers, and changed the song:

"White is the sky of dawn — as white her breast;
Blue is the sky of noon — as blue her eye;
Red is the sunset in the deep red west —
As red her cheek as the red sunset sky."

She halted with a little jump and exclamation, startled, suddenly seeing him.

"Oh!" she cried, "you frightened me."

She went on with the flowers. It did not win him; rather it sickened him.

"Now that you are here, Pepa," said he, with forced manner, after they had been silent for a little, "here in this bad spot, if there is anything I can do for you, let me do it and be free to ask. At least I may find a place for you better than the boat. And do you" — he had some grim pleasure in saying this, "you doubtless came also — to see Vicente?"

She turned dancing eyes on him and swung the wreath she had made carelessly in the air. She said nothing.

"I presume you may see him," continued Rodrigo.

"I do not want to see him," said she, lightly, like a child, and coming inside. She looked at the walls. "What a good, wild old place!" cried she, clapping her hands.

"For what is the wreath?" he asked.

Then she dazzled him with that old smile, and said, frankly:

"For you. I didn't think of it before." She laughed a rippling laugh. "To whom should a wreath be but to the victor? Don Rodrigo, if you would kneel down I would make a knight out of you — oh, to say nothing of crowning you! Señor, you did exceeding well. And the island is a good kingdom. I have read of smaller kingdoms and worse. Is it a tingling feeling to be a king? No — deeds! deeds! These are all that tingle! Oh, señor — do you know, as I leaned over the boat and looked just now at the water, the water itself was talking about the deeds! And all last night the wind laughed in the sail!"

"The wind and the water, then, Pepa, and you as well, gather more happiness from the deed than do any others."

"Then is the *jefe* dreaming bad dreams? Don Rodrigo, is there come some canker to you in the midst of your victories? Away with it — kill it — think not. This land of sun was never made for thought. Feel only — let the blood rush on. Ha! — you are master of the lake. I think you could be governor if you wished — general — king — emperor. Pretty dream! No, no, Pepa is no blind one. These things dazzle not the cold race of the north; and Don Rodrigo wandered into Mexico with a sigh upon his lips. Peace, not battles; freedom, not power; quiet and the deep life, not empire; love and the

dreams, and waters, winds, and mountains — these, and not ambition. Ah, there is more color in your Anglo-Saxon face! There are some can read you aright. And these things are higher and better.”

She paused and mused, and went on with that little touch of sadness that came so much into her words.

“Yes, better and higher. Blood and the wildness, action and madness, these wear away, these die. And one looks for that which shall not die; one longs for that which shall live on, live on forever. And what is it? *Ay de mi!* — who knows? Even I would find it, Pepa, the mad. Even I, when the fever and the restlessness are gone, shall wander on the earth seeking something, wondering what is that great, beautiful thing that I want, and when will it come, white and satisfying. Don Rodrigo, you are from civilization — we are savages. To you, then, it may come, the great white thing may be to you. To us — to me who am half wild, of course to me it will not come, and I shall go on wandering round the borders of the lake, and die, knowing it never. *Ay de mi!* Strange world! To him who has shall be given — so the wreath is yours; and I, who have not, give it to you. This is all I could do to add to your victory. This is all I ever — is it true? — is it all I ever gave to you?”

“This is not all. You gave to me first, love. Let me make no excuses and plead no cause. Till the last day I shall hate myself that I let you give it. I do not love you. This plainly, once for all. I never loved you. So, even were I willing (and if I could I might yet wish to repair some broken things) I could give you nothing in return. You gave me, secondly, your honesty and faithfulness, — rather you threw them away for me. For this, too, I shall ever feel remorse. I should perhaps say at once, coldly, that the

deed we did together revolts me. This is all. I come, then, to the iron duty. Tragedy alone can be the result of communication between us. So I sever our connection. Wherefore I shall go through life knowing myself hated by at least one. But I see no other way. And one last thing to you, — you were simply mistaken. You were not wicked, for you do not know wickedness. I shall never blame you. I shall blame myself. I shall forget that part of you that mistook. I shall remember only that part that loved. I have done. Pepa, I can never speak to you, I can never see you again."

He turned and went toward the door. She staggered. Her face was bloodless.

"This — this is the end?" she gasped.

He hesitated, suffering sharp pain, half inclined to turn and soften the parting. He went on, then, out of the door and down the rock. She was like a mad woman. She swayed and stumbled to the door after him. It swept over her in black despair — all that she had done for him, all that she had thrown away for him, the fears she had had that there was something in his civilization that would condemn her, the secret knowledge deep in herself that she was despicable. She believed in that moment she must fall and die. She cried out, stifled, after him:

"Rodrigo — Rodrigo —"

He began to climb. She came out, and, seeming to have lost her mind, crawled slowly down the rock where she might easily have walked or run. At the bottom she stretched out her arms to him, and cried his name again. He was half way up, sick to the bottom of his soul. She sat there on the ground between the tower and the boat, and watched him as he went higher on the prison road, the ripples at her

back, the rocks before her, the sun glistening on her shining black hair and her red dress, her eyes raised. He came at last to the summit. He did not turn or pause. Going on, the crest of the island hid him; he was gone.

She crept to the boat — lost. She climbed in and lay down on the floor. He had been right. He should be hated by one. Such was her nature. When her mind somewhat regained its powers, the revulsion came. As strong as her love had been, so strong was the new passion — ay, stronger. She lay there, seemingly stupefied, till the sun went down, and the night came. Her brain was a sea of fire. Her blood seemed molten metal in her. And there was but one thought — hate — hate.

The evening breeze, blowing through the old tower, found the wreath of white flowers on the floor.

CHAPTER VII

IN the hour in which Fortino, under the eye of the guard, had conversed with the prisoner, the giant had kept his tacit promise, and made no mention of Clarita. But he had told Vicente, casually, of the presence of Pepa. The news had startled and deeply interested the hearer. He had put many questions. She had wanted to come, she had seemed unhappy, she had evidently wished to be where the prisoner was; she had said she would make no attempt to see Vicente till Fortino should have done so. She had stayed in the boat not seeming in a lively mood. This was all the information Fortino advanced or apparently cared about.

What light shade of doubt had come over him concerning that unreadable girl, left Vicente when Fortino was gone. He had not seen her in the street at the time of the accident—would not have had sufficient cause, in that moment, to connect her definitely with it if he had. He had blamed the men only, with merely the shadow of a doubt concerning her. But if she had been in Quiroz's devilish scheme, plainly, thought he, she would have remained far from this spot, with Quiroz. Yet she had deserted that steely-eyed traitor and his machinations at the first moment. She had followed Vicente with the immediate, never-daunted spirit of action that characterized her. She had trusted herself on the lake at night with sailors; she had braved the waves and

the rocks of an unknown spot, determined to find him. What other purpose was possible to her? He could conceive of none; for on his infrequent visits to Chapala in earlier days he had not been permitted to see that the *jefe* was not looked upon by Josefa Aranja as an enemy. So there was, then, one other faithful to him. She was daring, too, besides being loyal. She was of a remarkably sharp mind, many times too sharp, indeed, though neither he nor Fortino knew the true degree of that acuteness. If by any seemingly impossible chance there should come opportunity of escape, the prisoner at least believed he knew that one of his quickest witted allies was at hand to help him. But he grew hopeless at the thought. There could be, said he, no such impossible chance.

Pepa's beauty was ever before him after that, transfigured in the shadows of his cell. He recalled her as she was in the old days, with her fascinating personality infusing ever fresh life into him. His old affection for her, grown into his present love, swept over him with redoubled force. It was a love always mingled with his dreams, being a part of ambition and great designs and therefore like the love of an older man, one who has grown with it into a condition wherein he is not so continuously in poignant consciousness of it because it is embodied with other elements of his life — therefore becoming more true and lasting. Doubtless because of the very quality of being a maturer and less fiery love, seeming to her only an undercurrent to his ambitions, it had failed to win anything lasting from her, failed at last utterly. But he loved her. Here in his loneliness, buried in these stones, the knowledge of her coming was like balm. The prison was more bearable after that.

There was something half congenial in the very flame of the candle. She had sent Fortino before her to find him and speak to him, and prepare the way for her. And he had waited all day for courage to enter. So she had not come. She would try to see him, doubtless, on the morrow, and they would permit it.

At midnight, after dreaming thus in a not unalloyed sadness, while the candle's flame sank in the wax and the wax ran slowly down to the square flat stones of the floor, he blew out the light and lay down in the corner on his blankets. The spot was dry and had been made clean. He was accustomed to sleeping on rude beds or without beds. Yet he did not fall asleep for hours. He was in one of those strained moods in which one's nerves seem verily to hold the body up from its resting-place, so that the muscles will not relax. There was no tower clock in these solitudes to mark the quarters with double beat. He could not reckon the time. Even with Pepa before him the hours seemed thrice their real length. Wakefulness finally wore him out. He sank into sleep in a darkness as absolute as the walls were solid.

It was four in the morning when he stirred, troubled. He turned and sighed heavily in his sleep. He had dreamed of a slight noise. His slumber was lighter. He dreamed of it again—a scraping sound. He turned still more, the mind on the point of awaking. The dream was then that of a dull thud, the gentle settling of a stone. He started into a sitting posture broad awake.

There was a light in the cell, issuing from a candle held in a man's hand. And the man himself stood in the opposite corner, silently. He was dressed in black from feet to neck. He was bareheaded. There

was an accumulation of earth and mold over all his person, staining his shirt, his hands, his face. Earth, too, was mingled with his tangled black hair. The prisoner knew not whether he dreamed or saw a reality. He knew that face. He had not seen it since he was fourteen years of age, but the monstrous ugliness of it, the haunting scar, had stayed with him. Hence that sudden apparition in his sleep was like a recollection bursting from the haze of the past. Years were blotted suddenly out, as though they died and left the sense of death. He was back in that other night when the only mother he had known had died, and Fortino had carried her away in the darkness, when they had torn him from the terrified Clarita and brought him so mysteriously here where his life changed. When there rises a past event which was of deep significance, the subsequent years, though they sink away, leave a pale halo round it, dress it in a garb that is unearthly, so that the event becomes the key to a new state of the heart, like music, and the event is different, potent, a new event.

There was no move from either for many seconds. On the face of the apparition remained the cowed slavishness. But there was a change in it. The forehead seemed smoother, the eyes held light. There was evident in the very awe and silence so habitual to him, something new and vast. He stooped and remained crouched on the floor, glaring at Vicente. The latter then found his nerves and his voice.

"How did you come?" he said, slowly. "Or are you real?"

The mute suddenly stood up again and, in silence, threw his arms into the air with a movement of profound exultation, wherein the face was as though

bathed in fire. Then its dead color came back, accented by earthen stains, and, seemingly crushed with fear, he crept, like the insane one that he was, over the floor to Vicente's side. He spread out his ten fingers slowly before him. They were long and covered with earth, the nails being black with it. He looked at them and the scar was stretched into that which may have been a smile. He took from his bosom some scraps and half sheets of paper, scrawled with characters. Kneeling on the floor he gave the first to Vicente.

"I shall be free. The years shall be nothing. The world shall be nothing. I can follow her."

"What do you mean?" said Vicente, profoundly moved to hope. "These are to me but words. Speak that which shall be of some comfort or some meaning to me. Who are you? From where do you come? As you came can I too not go and be free? I know you as one who took me over the water one memorable night thirteen years ago. Speak, for if there is to be light in this darkness, I can brook no delay. Do you come from that hermit who was your master, and are there tidings? Control your mind, man, and give me hope."

The mute thrust out another torn paper, fastening his dull eyes on Vicente and seeming to emit some of the crushed intensity of his strange being from those orbs. The words were these:

"You also are as I am. For thirteen years you, too, like myself, have been in this almighty power. There was no other god to me. There was no other hell. My soul was mastered. It wished to but it could not die. It dreamed of death. Death would have made it mad with joy. But he was the god of it. Thus also with you. Thirteen years only

with you. Twenty-seven with me. But you too are a slave. We shall be free."

"Where is he?" cried Vicente, smothering his voice. "Give me more meaning than this, and quick. I swear to you if your coming means freedom you shall have your reward. Is he here?" He shook the other's shoulder fiercely, rising to his feet in suppressed excitement. "Take me to him if there be a way."

The mute was unmoved. He held out another paper, a larger one. It was as follows, written finely and closely in the same hand. The ink was hardly dry.

"In every one of the twenty-seven I would have slain him. I could not. His mind was god. It ground me down. It held me without speech. He has never left this island. He is here now, in the other prison. When I last went for food he was ill. He is old. He had not the right medicines, nor food for more than two meals. I was returning with these things and awaiting a wind when they captured me. I told them he would starve. They did not heed. It was horror to me. The almighty mind was dragging me back. But the others held my body. To starve him was terror; yet I wanted to starve him and be free; yet I dared not. I was held two days and two nights before we came here. There was no boat or food here for him. Nor could he walk for being old and ill. They would have sent me on and called it being free. I dared not go. He was dragging me back, so that I knew he was not dead. I got out of the boat in the dark and swam back. I crawled, dragged by him who was not dead, under the rocks to the other end. I went into his cell afraid. I fell down and fainted in the almighty

power. Afterward I heard him crawling from the cot, cursing in his throat. I felt his fingers on my neck. But he did not kill me. He dragged me back. So I went and stole food and liquor in the night from the tower. Last night. He will die. His body is weak but his mind is the same. So we are slaves yet. To-day I lay and thought, while he groaned. To-night I wrote these to you. I knew we should be free when his mind dies—and I can follow her. I know how I shall follow, and how soon, when he is gone. I know where she will be waiting. Then I began to come. I did not begin soon enough. It took so long. I knew the place always, but I had not come in for years. The tunnel is so long and all the top has fallen, and earth. So I had to dig through piles of it and crawl over stones. It took me four hours. When I came under the floor I went back for these papers and I am adding this last about the tunnel. He does not know you are here. I told him nothing. He thinks I let him starve because he is weakening and losing his power on me. This is why he crawled to me to strangle me. But he knew he would then starve. We shall be free."

The meaning of this burst on the prisoner. His mind was suddenly alert. He was bent on action with a haste imperious. He was down on his knees at the mute with both hands on his shoulders. He brought his own face close to the other's and bent his powerful eyes on the insane one's.

"Come," he said in low, deep command. "Come at once with me. I must see him before he dies. We shall be free indeed, but take me there at once."

The other shook in his old dread.

"You are afraid I shall kill him," said Vicente,

reading him and falling in with his illusions. "Fear it not. I do not dare. He is dragging us—he is dragging me too. Come. We dare not wait."

The other's long, cold fingers closed in a grip of great strength on Vicente's wrist, and, his eyes always on Vicente's, he was drawn up.

"Where is the stone? Show me the way—he is dragging us both—" The mute was stooping in the corner. "He is drawing us with his almighty mind—" The mute was straining his back. "He will die and we shall be free—" A flat stone over which Vicente had walked a score of times came up. "But we dare not kill him. Come. Come. Go you first and lead me—" The mute leaped into a hole and disappeared. "We shall be free."

The candle was passed to the leader and Vicente lowered himself. The mute replaced the stone. From the hole they descended irregular steps some fifteen feet. They were then in a passage far underground, six feet in height, four feet in width, arched of roof, which roof had been of stone. Some of the stones had fallen; others remained jutting out of the mold overhead. The candle-light cast a glare over a blank wall behind them and the steps at the side, and lost itself to the front in the shadows that marked the passage leading into unseen regions to the south. The mute cast a fearful glance back at the follower and met the latter's compelling eye. The exultation came again into the insane one's face, and the scar, a thousand times more hideous buried thus in the earth, shining white out of the gloom, was stretched into unwonted prominence. The journey was begun—the mute silent and steady of foot, Vicente agitated in spite of all possible self-control.

The original purpose of this tunnel, which leads

from the central prison to that on the southern headland of the island, passing under both moats, has been and will doubtless continue to be, a matter of speculation to the few visitors to that lonely spot. It may still be seen, even entered, by the lifting of the stone. It could not, however, at this date, be traversed without much excavation, for more of the roof and some of the earth that was over it have fallen in. It seems altogether improbable that it could have been dug by prisoners attempting an escape, for, in addition to the difficulty of conducting such a work and disposing of the earth in secrecy (though such works have been done) the passage is larger than one thus undertaken would be likely to be. Furthermore, it was roofed with stone. It is as straight as intervening rocks would permit, passing, so nearly as one can judge, along the line of, and beneath that surface road, which has been referred to as leading from the one prison past the square tower to the other.

It has been suggested that this in itself was a secret prison, one compared to which other dungeons would seem cheerful. However tenable or otherwise such a theory may be, it is certain that in two places there are small square rooms excavated out of the earth and the rocks far underground and leading into the tunnel only. There are also certain places that may have been other such cells. More than this, in the two that remain apparent there are human bones. But this latter fact in itself need not be taken as of such weight as might at first appear, when are considered the methods still in use in certain parts of the republic of disposing of human remains.

The thought of that possible line of dungeons, the ideas the bones suggest to the mind, are too revolt-

ing. One prefers some more charitable theory. Mexico shows many strange things. In Yucatan is a graveyard where skeletons are exhibited in pots, labelled, where skulls line the walls and bones are strung on cords. In the City of Guanajuato every tourist is shown the underground passage filled with its ghastly array of mummified bodies. In the City of Oaxaca there is a tunnel leading for a considerable distance from a monastery to a church, the entrances being secret, the purposes unknown. There are in Mexico City itself many freaks of architecture the study of which would infinitely reward the pains, many a church of mysterious associations, many a house long since called haunted from some peculiarity of its construction. Wherever mediævalism pushed its way it left these mysteries of the builder's art, for its mind was morbid. Whatever the purpose of that passage in Prison Island, whatever the scenes enacted there, the passage remains and speaks not.

The mute and his follower proceeded. The ground was damp with mold. Naked rocks, jutting into the tunnel, looked black and gaunt in the light. The leader's haste was extreme, becoming like the haste of excitement. At a distance of some forty yards the candle cast a gleam into one of those cells already referred to. The bones flashed out of the gloom to the left and a skull lay in the door. Neither man seemed to see them. At sixty yards or more the same sight revealed itself to the right. There were places where the journeyers crawled over heaps of stone. It became apparent that the mold and stains upon the mute's person were not causeless. Vicente himself gathered earth as he proceeded.

They came at length to a spot where the roof was intact and marked by a line of stone masonry, the

stones running transversely to the tunnel's direction. It seemed to Vicente that this roofing was much higher than the rest. He looked more closely and perceived that that portion of the real roof had fallen in (the mute was even then crawling over it with difficulty) leaving this other exposed above it. He peered up. There was a chink between the stones and he saw the sky and a star. He was looking through the bottom of the moat that cuts the island in two. That faint glimpse of the freedom of skies made his heart bound. He followed the mute, who had crawled over the obstruction and was hastening on in silence. Having traversed a distance of some one hundred yards they arrived at the tunnel's end, a blank wall of natural rock. There were steps here and they went up. The steps led to a natural opening where two buried boulders left a chink between them, the one rock protruding beyond the other somewhat concealing the passage as the wings of a stage conceal the entrances. The irregular steps curved as they ascended, and the climbers, passing between those boulders, issued of a sudden in a cell.

The mute was leading. There had been no light in the apartment and the candle flame broke on complete darkness. They were nearer the surface and the air was fresh. Once inside, the chink that had admitted them between the two rocks was almost invisible, owing to the lapping of one boulder over the other. Vicente had no more than set foot on the floor of the cell when he experienced that sudden wheeling about of directions which one so often experiences when he has been in unknown quarters, has become confused as to the cardinal points, and finds himself again at a familiar spot. The whole cell circled half round. He perceived the place he

had seen that other night when he was a boy. Recognition swept over him, accompanied for a moment by a blinding mist of recollection. It was as though this had been, in the old times, a spot of enchantment. The shelves were there—the wine bottle fallen empty on its side. The table and the books were the same—the bench was there also. He turned and saw the cot.

The mute was standing in the cell's middle with the candle held over his head, its light falling on Vicente and on the bed. That light cut a face out of the gloom over the couch like the face of a cameo. The body lay at full length. The face was white with a distinct, unusual whiteness. It was old and heavily lined but its lean features were strong, even masterful, drawn though they were with pain and sickness. The eyes, burning, stared at Vicente. The lips were parted in excitement and the hermit's breath could be heard short and fast. A long hand uncovered itself and clutched the blankets. Staring still at Vicente's face the old man was suddenly half up, his features distorted in a fierce joy that would scarcely let him gasp:

“You — you!”

He was shaking from head to foot. He put out a lean limb with its foot to the floor and would have come on to the unexpected visitor, tottering, arms outstretched, had not Vicente prevented him.

“Lie down,” said the latter firmly but gently, putting him back in bed with much difficulty. “You are too weak.”

“What, then,” cried the hermit ravingly, “led you here at last, you, my hope, my life, blood of my old soul! Have you come to see me die?”

“Heaven is with you,” said Vicente, kneeling down

beside him, conscious that death could not be far from one who looked like this. "Give me your hand. You should not fear death; you do not fear it. Thank God I am brought before you leave me! Señor, your work is done — done, and I am here. I have felt your power and your help every moment of my life since first I saw you. In the dark hour of my fortunes I have come to give you thanks. You shall have your reward."

The other again started up.

"Why is the hour dark?" cried he. "What have you come to say? Speak! The last they told me was of continuous victory. Oh death of my old torn heart! Has this, too, failed me!"

"They captured me," said Vicente calmly, "in Tizapan, through treachery. They brought me here and imprisoned me in the other prison. This man came to-night and showed me the tunnel, and I have followed him."

"Captured you?" cried the hermit, seizing the other's shoulders and fastening his fiery eyes on Vicente's face. "Then what is that? Nothing! Ha! ha!" wildly. "Prisoner? Who can be a prisoner here but he who is captive to the mind? The island is honeycombed. You are free! There is no prison here." The speaker would sit up, in which posture he swayed and shook in weakness and excitement. "Victory will come back! And they dreamed they could hold the church on the church's island! Son! Son! The arm of the Lord is yours!"

"Then in His name lie down and calm yourself," cried Vicente. "I will not let you die."

"I will not lie down. Death is on me and I must speak before he comes. I have felt his hand. Yet, I cannot die till I tell it all; yet I must haste to tell

it lest I die. This shall be my great peace. Oh! thou Blessed Mary! Thou hast brought him here at last! I longed for you. I dreamed of you night and day while death was coming. Must I die, I said, and he not know? Must my lips shut on the knowledge and be not opened, when I have sat here or trod these stones or lain on this couch so many years dreaming of the day of the church's victory when at last I should tell you and love should be unburdened of its secret. Yet first let me show you your freedom. You see this mute who stands there with the candle. He shall lead you out. Look—there are the steps by which you first entered this place long ago. They led then to a door at the end of the shaft of this prison. They lead there still, but the door is barred by tons of ruins. You came in with ease. You could not go out were you a hundred times as strong as you are. But I was ready for the event. Five years ago I saw that the walls and roof about that door must fall, and my entrance be perhaps cut off. I went through the tunnel you have traversed to-night and looked at that prison. I said to myself, These walls are stronger but these too may fall and block the way. To dig through earth, said I, is easier than to dig through stone; and it may fall and bury me alive. So I put this slave to work. Half way up those other stairs which you to-night ascended, you will find another fissure in the rocks. He dug there, slanting downward. This prison is over the water and the distance to the shore is not great. The rocks hindered him, but I made him labor on. In two months he did it, alone. There is, therefore, another tunnel, leading down from this cell to a spot not seen from other portions of the shore. Its opening is under the precipice whereon stands this prison, with

rocks guarding it and cactus hiding it. Then this slave dug in the lake and made a cove for his boat. I was safe; I dared the very earthquakes; and one of them came. I was here alone one night when the shock rocked these stones. I heard a crash like thunder and I knew that another portion of the ruins had come down, as had fallen so many, as all will fall at last. I tried the door. It was blocked. I sat till morning and this slave returned. He could not enter in the old way, so he came up from beneath. I keep always ink and paper for him to write. He told me that the greater portion of the end of the prison that is over us had fallen down about my door, burying it. I was not sorry. I was prepared, and I was the better hid. Through the way this slave has dug, you too shall find freedom. Victory again! Oh! thou Mother of God, I give thee thanks! The mute's boat will carry you."

This long speech had not been uttered thus consecutively. The speaker was too weak. He paused many times, gasping. At the last words there was an extraordinary motion of despair from him who had till then stood in absolute motionlessness, holding the candle. He put the light on the floor, and fell down before the couch.

"What is this?" muttered the hermit, turning his eyes on the crouching one. "Take your pen, man, and write."

The other, livid, arose and secured the necessary materials from the shelf. Vicente held a candle and the mute wrote:

"The boat is not there."

"How!" cried the trembling old man, bending on the writer a look that seemed to make him shrivel.

"What treason is this, you who have left me here to

starve? O death! this is thy hand. I have lost my powers. Let me die — let me die! Where is the boat?"

"On the other side," wrote the mute, scarcely able to make the letters. His exultation was gone. There could have been imagined no more abject creature.

The scene was one of pain to Vicente. He broke in at this point, and, pitying the insane one, told such of his story as he knew, showing that no blame could be attached to that helpless and speechless man, who seemed, in his slavery, to have believed himself culpable. The hermit sank back in despair at this news. He lay meditating with his thoughts burning in the orbs that never lost fire.

"But for this," continued Vicente, "there is a remedy; and the mute can yet play his part and free me. There came to this island to-day — rather yesterday, for it must be near morning — two of my friends with a *canoa*; the fisherman Fortino, and the girl, Josefa Aranja. With them are two sailors. I would trust that man with my life, and the girl's wits are beyond measurement. If I leave the escape with them it can be effected. Will this man carry them word, and will he do it in secrecy?"

The hermit, again in excitement, partly arose, resting on his elbow.

"It is not," said he, "that he will or will not. Death as yet has none of me!"

"Then shall I write a note," continued Vicente, arising, restless, eager, absorbed in his plans, and pacing the floor as he spoke, "with the details of escape therein. This man shall deliver it either to the girl or to Fortino. No — he does not know them. Then it shall be done thus. There is but one woman on the island. He cannot mistake her. You will

find her, man, sleeping in the *canoa*." He came and laid his hand on the mute's shoulder, and looked into the mute's dull eyes. "I shall probably see her to-morrow, but so guarded that I can say nothing. To-morrow night you will go and find her. You will communicate with her in secret, giving her the note. We need not fear. She will make the contents known to the fisherman, and my orders will be obeyed. It can be done! It shall be done! The *canoa* shall come to the tunnel's opening, and I shall enter it and sail to that point of the shore to which the wind can most quickly take us. You are the man to help me. Will you go?"

"He will go," said the hermit.

Whereat the mute sat down by the wall, and, drawing his hat over his face, remained still.

The hermit's manner underwent a change. He lay back in an intensity of thought that made him for a long time silent, while there were evidences on his face of a mental struggle. He was extremely weak, and breathed with difficulty, so that during his subsequent narrative he paused often to gain strength. He kept his eyes always fastened on the face of Vicente who came again and stood by his side.

"Dawn is coming," said Vicente. "What medicines have you, and before I leave you, what can I do?"

"Nothing," said the other, rousing himself from his revery, "you can do nothing so grateful as to listen to me and bear with me. Come — let me touch your hand — Ah, it is the hand of youth. Yes, I am to come to the end, if not to-night, to-morrow, or to-morrow night. I am as ready as I should ever be. Let God judge that readiness, and, if I must be punished with the fire, let the fire come

quickly. I will give you a little history first, which I have buried in these ruins, longing always to give it to you. Boy, I am a pitiable old man, if a stern and a hard one. The stern and the hard can love as deeply as the tender. You, at least, for a reason you shall know, will not judge me too harshly. And the mute there, if he will hear, let him hear. He knows it already as though it were his blood.

"I am a pure-blooded Spaniard. I was born in one of the Basque Provinces. I was raised by the church and for it. It is man's greatest protector and his only hope. It shall yet be free and master. I entered the Guadalajara monastery in 1810, while Hidalgo was yet victorious. His victories fired me with resentment and with a burning desire to crush the rebels. As revolution bore on, and I saw the Spanish power totter, I only, among all my brethren, knew the greatness of the danger of the church. I began to regret in bitterness that I had entered the monastery. I longed for freedom and action."

A fit of coughing stopped him. He choked, his frame shaken. Having recovered himself, he proceeded:

"I desired war, that I might fight for the church. I was restless to sally out and meet those who, though they carried her banner, were undermining her. The thoughts and the duties of the cloister could not confine my mind. Retirement, cried I, for others. These walls are not for me. The desire became, with time, a purpose. I was on the point of casting away my monkish habits. I had already made plans for the raising of troops. I was in communication with the government. My project was not altogether frowned upon by the clergy. If I was

mad enough to do it, said they, they would assist me ; for they believed that my plans were far-reaching, that, with their help, I could rouse this northern section of the land to resist the new movement.

“ I was now known to the clergy throughout many States. The danger to the church was grown more apparent. The time was ripe. Then was it my bad fortune to fall ill. I was confined to my cell’s bed for a full year. When I at last recovered, Hidalgo had long since fallen, there was a lull in the storm of revolt. The church began again to repose in a fancied safety. I longed yet to act. But the time had passed. I tried to return to my former quieter pursuits and to confine my mind to the duties and the thoughts of religion. I doubted many times whether I was meant for that life. I had in me too much of the fire of youth, too unbridled a nature ; for I was bold. My mind, too, possessed some unusual powers, and they called my eye, in monkish jest, the demon’s eye. It was in my nature to be second to none. In rank I was many times outclassed. But my mind would dominate for itself without rank. I found by the very force of my will, or my personality, or my sternness — I know not what to call my power — that I could bend the wills of those about me. Some deemed me a wizard, or in league with the devil, which thought was folly. Where is there a community or a group wherein some one mind is not the leader ?

“ After some years I found the force of my nature was really, though not nominally, the master of the monastery, and thus the wielder of power that extended far beyond its walls. You see me weak and fallen. Boy, boy — I was a lion in those days ! At my tread priests trembled. During those years I

kept my eye ever fastened on the revolt. At times I believed the country needed me, and I was on the point of action, but the immediate danger would pass. Many things, too, baffled me. Where my personality could not extend its own immediate power, there grew up the belief that my influence was sinister, so there were machinations in the church against me. Thus does she ever defeat her end, dividing against herself. Oh, Mother of the world! Keep thyself intact and thy parts consistent, or thy doom is sealed!

"At last, revolution growing fiercer and the danger that I alone perceived in its fulness, more threatening, I pleaded with the clergy in many parts, showing them by all reason that with permanent liberty from Spain on a continent of republican institutions, the power of the Church must become subordinate. Many saw the truth. Others were for temporizing; for holding aloof till the complete success of one party should warrant our support of that party. Still others were for crushing both parties and establishing an independent monarchy. I went to work, then, against prodigious odds, to bring out of the chaos a party to support me and an army to fight for Spain. My plans were again maturing. I could brook the cloister but little longer. I was ready to throw away my clerical garb and take the field."

He was again forced to pause. He lay breathing heavily. It was long before he could muster strength to proceed.

"In the year 1818 came the great new thing into my life. I have told you of your mother. She was then nineteen years of age. I saw her first one moonlight night in November. I was standing in the door of my cell, dreaming of my coming course

of action in the world. I saw the prior crossing the *patio* by the fountain and the book. Behind him came that which was unwonted in those walls — a woman. Her mantilla had fallen to her shoulders, leaving her head bare. The moonlight fell on her masses of black hair and her young face. The last thing my eyes shall behold in this world shall be that scene. The prior came into the *corredor* and asked me to admit them into my cell. I did so, and she sat down, we standing. She turned her eyes to me. Boy, they were deep as the sea. There was the mystery of life and death in them. I seemed to be looking into an unfathomable past, or an unfathomable future. She was beautiful as no other human being I had ever seen was beautiful. She called herself Eulalia.

“She told us, then, with an infinite sadness, her story; why she had sought the monastery, why she had persisted, through all objections, in entering. She laid before us, indeed delivered to us, all the proofs of her lineage. She had come from San Pedro, where she had hid. Her father, through whom the line descended, had died, and her mother had followed him into the grave. She was the only child. She had lived, then, nearly alone, having only one old lady, whom she paid to stay with her. She had been lonely. She had brooded and dreamed of the power and the right represented in her person. She had watched the revolt and the progress of events, and it had seemed to her that now while the country was seeking change, and old institutions were breaking up, now was the time to strike.

“Her nature was deep. It had in it that peculiar melancholy, fascinating sadness, that we call qualities of the Aztec. She was gentle, yet great of nature.

She shrank from, yet longed for power. Above all else, the traditions of her family and her duty concerning them were sacred to her. She told us with a memorable simplicity, that she loved no one, was beloved by none; that love alone could bring children to her. She had now no prospect, no wish of marriage. Even did she marry, how many years must pass before a son could grow to manhood and fight the battles of his ancient race! She had seen the country tottering round her. She had dreaded letting pass perhaps the only chance, the one momentous time, for striking. So she had come to the church, known to support monarchy, known to contain a party of no little strength who favored a new and independent throne. She had come, too, to that institution of the church most secret, keeping secrecy most inviolable. She was weary of the world, said she, weary of the burden of sorrow and exile descended through so many centuries to her, borne now by her alone. She could not bear it longer; she gave it to us. If we deemed it best to act, we would do so; if not, we would keep her secret for her.

"I was astounded and deeply moved. We kept her many days, hid her there, in the monastery till the facts could be made plainer and we should have no doubt. We came to believe her. There was then communicated to the powers of the church in many places, a hint of a royal personage ready to take the throne. We did not divulge her identity or her place of concealment. It was seen at once that a considerable party could be brought to espouse her cause, but for one thing — that she was a woman. Nor did they yet know the heir was a woman, for this fact, she begged, should not at first, in sounding

the church, be revealed. Ah, she was a woman indeed, a girl — not a statesman. Had she been a man there might have been hope. I had espoused the cause of Spain. I had bitterly opposed independence, either monarchical or republican. I saw now plainly, indisputably, that her cause was hopeless, chiefly because she was a woman and could not herself act, but must leave others to act for her, which is weakness in so rugged a land as this; also because I knew, saw with trembling, that the deeper current of the land was then setting against monarchy. So I should naturally have opposed her.

“At first I held my peace, while investigating her claims. In that investigation I saw her often. Alas! my youth and my fire! And I think it would not have been necessary for me to see her often. Once, surely once, were enough, even were it only as she crossed to my door in the moonlight, by the fountain and the book. Whatever hopes, whatever emotions or passions I had till then in my life experienced were as nothing, were dead, when Eulalia came to me. I knew then to what fierceness of love all my strange powers of heart and mind could be converted. War and the church were suddenly dwarfs. Action and control of men were pigmies. There towered up in my life, overshadowing all, crushing all, an edifice reared on a tempest, whose fall must be ruin. I leaped to sustain it, to make it stable, real. I would have cast away the world, only to take her and hold her. What were schemes of conquest to me then, parties, lineages, thrones? So my course was checked and my dream of action died.

“By the power I wielded in the monastery I was with her much alone in her concealment. Ay — and she grew to love me. My heart must then have

compelled love in the coldest breast that calls itself a woman. We were seized by that new force and whirled away in it. We were blind to days and weeks. The sweet madness ran riot and, in that one deep, true, God-given union, we drank life to its dregs. When we came a little to ourselves her party was clamoring for action. Those who hung from me were awaiting my words and wondering at my delay. From that awakening her cause was mine, though I was sickened for all deeds, hated the world, knew in my heart's bottom that to try to raise her throne was folly."

Again he paused exhausted. He stretched out a thin arm and pointed to a spot on the floor. Vicente, turning, found a bottle of liquor, doubtless stolen by the mute. A swallow of this revived the narrator.

"I now speak of one of whom I loathe to speak, one whom it has taken these many years and all that old power of mind to crush, so that my life is wasted. There was another monk, named Ignacio Mendez, who loved her. It was he who had carried her her meals since first she came. He was of a silent and sinister nature, but of a manner that convinced and an eye that spoke of strength and purpose. He grew out of himself with love for her. Half he lost his reason. He was desperate, but cunning. He told her of his love, pleaded with her to go away with him — this before she had given her heart to me. She repelled his advances. I think he dreamed of force but dared not use it. He could gain no word of encouragement. She shut herself from him and would not be seen. Then it was she loved me, and Mendez saw it. He perceived the progress of my power over her, of hers over me. He burned with jealousy. I have found him many times at night

stealthily creeping about her door or mine. I longed to kill him. At length all the monastery could not but see my position and his. Scandal was rife, though it did not go beyond the walls. But my power was such that no one, not those above me, dared to murmur; and my love, God be my witness, was strong, mastering, constant.

"When we awoke from the first blindness and perceived that there was a party in the state clamoring for action from each of us; when we turned to each other and realized that strife was not for us, that all we wished was to sink out of the world we had known and be at rest together; then remorse fell on her. She saw the falseness of our situation. She could not bear it. In this state, believing that she had been my ruin as well as her own, she suddenly disappeared one night, bribing the porter to let her out. That was in December, 1818.

"In the morning, when it was discovered that she was gone, the monastery was searched. She was not found, and the porter at last admitted the fact of the bribe. There was, however, another thing discovered that filled me with terror. Ignacio Mendez was not there. That creeping master of cunning, always watching her with jealous eye, had followed her. I was overwhelmed with grief and misery. I feared, for her, the worst, for I believed I knew him who had followed her. I know now that my fears were needless. She hid herself so effectually that all his efforts were vain. He did not find her. She swore to me before she died, and I know the oath was sacred, that she had not seen him, had hated his name. On that morning of the discovery the prior found a letter from Mendez to him, wherein the hypocrite pleaded forgiveness for this sudden unauthorized departure, saying that in

his heart he had committed a great sin by looking on a woman with love, that remorse had fallen on him, that fearing permission for a pilgrimage might not be granted in these times of wars, he had been unable to disobey the dictates of that remorse and had gone to tread barefoot all the stony way to Guadalupe as a penance, that the Holy Virgin might perhaps grant forgiveness.

"I was infuriated. I broke all bounds and burst out of the monastery. I searched the land for her for months, letting ambitions and wars shift for themselves, or die in such confusion as they might create. I cared for nothing but to find her, save that Mendez, too, in my despair and madness, I longed to seize and crush. I dare not think what crime might then have stained my hands had I discovered him.

"After the long weariness and the long failure I returned. My power in the church was gone. I was deemed a traitor, at best a broken penitent. I had no heart for action, no desire for deeds. It would have taken long and great labor to secure support, even had I wished to act. I buried myself, exercising none of my powers, doing nothing. The force that had won me ascendancy over men's minds cared no more for that ascendancy but lay dormant in me, ready only to spring forth to rescue her, or to crush Mendez. With that dream I slept, awoke, and lived, to force him to the earth. Murder was no more in my mind, now that days of thought were plentiful; rather would I have dominated him with my will.

"Thus the greater part of the new year passed and the new republic was becoming more than a name. I cursed it in my heart, but would not rouse myself from my apathy to combat it. In July of that year Mendez suddenly returned from his pil-

grimage. He brought relics from the sacred hill, and he being obsequious, they began to believe the story of his penance. He was received and made to do other penance. I saw the gloom of failure in his face. I believed that he too, like myself, had failed to find her, and that he had gone to Guadalupe to give color to his tale. I felt joy, seeing his gloom. He was a changed man. He went about dull-eyed. I think he was dreaming of her. I determined to give myself the secret morbid happiness of crushing his mind. I now believe he had already begun losing his reason with grief at not finding her. 'What!' said I, 'this worm dares grieve for her — does he then think that I, too, have had no grief?' Worst of all, his constant and fixed belief now was that Eulalia had loved him. This he even said to me, swore it, taking a hateful comfort from it. I began to call out again those mysterious powers of my mind. The long days and nights, the silence and the secrecy of the monastery, lent me occasion to bring about my desires. I haunted him. I maddened him. I finally cowed him with these old eyes, then young and fierce.

"You would ask me how this could be accomplished, and what was the nature of my power. I answer that I know not. It was born with me. I had ever found that my mind and my will were more powerful than those of the majority of men. Did I but exercise my influence on them I could secure obedience. There is nothing supernatural in this. Every man could thus influence some one. I chanced to have a power that influenced many. If history could but reveal it, there would be found many minds like this, and certain forces that dominated great events would be explained. What I might have

done had my life been different God alone knows. He alone can judge me for throwing the power away.

"I saw the effects on Mendez. I was bending him by haunting him and by willing it. Perhaps I myself was half mad, so that, on his nascent, grief-born insanity, I exercised a crushing fascination. These things I do not know. But I was fast making his life but a kind of mental dependency of mine. He feared me. He was drawn by me. In silence I commanded his movements, and in silence he obeyed. My hatred for him never abated. I was absorbed in the loathsome task, for otherwise life would have been empty to me. This is one curse of the cloister. If a passion or a crime or a fall comes to one, there is no chance for the open, clear breath of life to flow in and cure, to bring new thoughts, hopes, purposes. One is left to brood on the one stain till the whole course, to the brink of the grave is stained.

"Before dawn on the twenty-third day of September, 1819, it being still dark, there came a tapping on the door of my cell. I arose and found the porter of the street gate. He had long been, secretly, my friend. He knew of my love for Eulalia. He came in in excitement and whispered to me that she was at the door. I bade him let her in and bring her to me at once; and I dressed myself in agitation. I had scarcely finished when she crept in alone, out of the night. She was haggard but beautiful yet with that deathless beauty. She was weak and staggered. I caught her in my arms, where she sank, helpless. I was trembling so that I could scarcely stand, so I laid her on my bed and knelt beside her. She told me, in two sentences which she could hardly

speaking, where she had hid from me and in what loneliness. Torn with doubt I asked if Mendez had found her. She swore to me with death on her lips that she had not seen him, nor had she so much as conversed with any other than the woman who lived with her and had hidden her. One of the monks understood the practice of medicine. I hastened away and brought him. As we entered the cell together I saw that hated Mendez crouching outside by the fountain.

"When the child was born she was rendered insane with delirium and shrieked. The physician sent me for certain other medicines. I was filled with horror. I ran out and across the *patio*. Mendez was still by the fountain, and the morning light was beginning to appear. When first the physician had come, a knife had fallen from Eulalia's dress. I picked it up and gazed at the shining blade, scarcely daring to think of the deed she had doubtless believed she might find necessary. This dagger I still held in my hand as I dashed across the open court. Doubtless my anguish had weakened my mind and the last of Mendez's liberty and hate and cunning came up in him. As I passed him he laughed an exultant laugh. I turned with curses on my lips, whereto he responded and swore that the child was his. The black lie so maddened me that I was like a demon. 'Slave!' I cried, 'Slave forever!' Uttering which, I struck at him with the knife blindly. He dodged, but was too late. The blade laid open a gash across his cheek and, entering his blasphemous mouth, cut his tongue so that the half of it hung as by a thread. I paid no more heed but ran on, secured the articles needed and returned, planting myself at the door ready to defy the world.

"All the other rooms about that *patio* were at that time empty, and as we had kept my door closed and the walls were thick and the distances in that monastery great, no one else was yet aroused. The shrieks of delirium had soon ceased, but the delirium itself seemed fiercer. Once more the doctor sent me away. I went, passing the figure of Mendez as he crawled, dazed and bleeding, through the long corridors to his own apartment. It was necessary on this errand that I should go to the extreme opposite side of the monastery.

"When at length I returned, all was silence. I hastened to my cell. Its door was open. I went in and stood aghast. It was empty save for the child."

At this point the speaker paused longest. His breath was hoarsely audible. He lay staring up at Vicente utterly unable to proceed. When at last he went on his voice was weaker.

"I ran to the door and the physician was approaching. I cried to him and he came running with water. He had been only to the fountain, had left her scarcely ten seconds. In that space of time she had arisen in her delirium, weak as she was, and disappeared. We knew she must have taken the nearest passage, else the doctor would have seen her. We ran its length. It led, after some windings, to the front and out. We came to the open space between the buildings and their inclosing walls. The great door giving exit to the street was open, and the porter, stiff and motionless with fear, was staring out like a mummy. The gray light of dawn was slowly growing and the south wind blew over us. We heard cries in the street without. She had, in her sudden insanity, staggered all this distance in some feverish dream that she must escape. She had

beaten on the door and seemed so like one from the grave, that the porter, in horror, had let her out. We were in the street at once. We were too late. She had fallen dead and there were three gendarmes lifting her. I learned afterward that she had cried out many times that the monks had murdered her. The officers would not listen to us. They were sullen and seemed inclined to arrest us, but had no authority for so doing. The prior was now aroused and came out with others. He recognized her and spoke to the officers. 'At least,' said he, 'let the body be brought into the monastery.' As the gendarmes had no vehicle and it was some distance to headquarters, they consented, that she might not be left in the street. When we were at length within and she was placed upon a bed and her features composed, the reality of the fact of her death broke over me with crushing force. I sank down and buried my face beside her. Then, knowing that she was beyond my call, that the monks would see to her decent burial, and that it was only a question of time till the matter would be taken up by the civil authorities, the monastery searched, the scandal spread far and near, myself and Mendez likely arrested, even, in those corrupt, revolutionary, and church-hating times, accused of murder—I decided at once upon flight. The world was nothing to me; let me bury myself away from it, now that she was dead. But I would take Mendez. My hate riveted me to him. He should not remain to declare she loved him. By nature was he my slave, my slave should he be.

"The purpose crystallized at once in me, and my determination pushed its way morbidly to its end. I took the prior to his cell. I reminded him how it was that the child was heir to a throne and that the

time would come when he would be needed. I pleaded that the tenderest care should be taken of the son of one who could not now expend that care himself. I secured his promise, aroused his enthusiasm. I told him of my prospective hiding-place, that I should bury myself forever from a world that I could see only to curse. I knew he would keep my secret. I went then to Mendez's room. He was weak with loss of blood, but, when I had bandaged his wound and given him stimulants, he could obey me. He seemed forever crushed. He followed me like a dog, partly because I mastered him, partly because he, too, sought flight.

"There were horses kept within the monastery walls. We took two, and, with some provisions, went out of that rear entrance which is seldom opened. Before sunrise we were out of the city. We rode straight for the lake. We passed that first night in the mountains over Mescala. The dumb Mendez here made his last effort to break his bondage. He would have left me. I had brought a pistol and he had none. I told him I would kill him. They had called my eye the devil's. I used it then as though they had spoken truly. I bent him down and he stayed and followed me. In the night we stole a boat and sailed here.

"The weeks and months that followed were a silent struggle. I mastered him. I made his mind only a part of my own. His tongue was useless and he could not speak. His hopes were dead. His brain succumbed to mine. He believed still, even now believes, that she loved him. For which I hold his bondage unbreakable. When the store of provisions we had brought from the monastery and increased upon the way was exhausted, I ventured

to send him back. This was the test of my power. Our horses we had abandoned, so he went on foot. He journeyed only at night. He, too, is ever afraid of capture and trial for an offence that his mind cannot recall. As for me, I know the danger is long since passed. At the monastery he secured provisions, and wrote them certain orders I had commanded him to write. As the father of the child who might one day be their hope, they respected and obeyed me. They made all necessary arrangements for the mute's regular journeys. Mendez returned, and when I heard his oars here at the shore one morning of deep anxiety, I knew he was conquered and the island life assured.

"I turned to that life with a longing for a peace I never found. From remaining here for fear of being taken, I came to remain because I did not wish to go. The death of Eulalia caused an investigation and trouble. I was searched for but not found. The unsettled condition of the country rendered a continued prosecution of the inquiry impossible. The matter died out of men's minds. But I hated the world. This cell came to be my home. I would not go. I heard of the child often. He was strong and had been carefully tended. When he was one year old, having in this spot matured my plans, I had them bring him to the shore. I sailed with him then, the mute being my only other companion, to Chapala. I wanted him to be raised freely on lake and among mountains, that he might know the people. I engaged that a good woman should keep him and the priest should overlook his care and give me information of him. I had seen the independence of this country become more assured. I had perceived both the republican spirit and the danger to the church

growing. My interest in the world thus much returned, to rear my child, my boy, son of my great love, to be what his nature demands. This absorbed me, this has been my dream, my life. And now that I die I free you from this prison—oh my son! my son! And victory shall be yours. And thus let these old, old eyes, buried so long in the earth's rocks, weep tears of joy that, though I be dead, my one great love shall live on and rule forever!"

Vicente had long since fallen to his knees by the cot. He buried his face beside that of the hermit and cried, brokenly:

"My father!"

The dawn was beginning to shed gray light over the island when the prisoner, pale, changed, crept back through the tunnel, issued like one dreaming in his cell, lowered the stone, and threw himself down on his blankets.

CHAPTER VIII

ABOUT seven o'clock of the previous evening the wind, for the first time in three days, had swerved somewhat from the west toward the north. It was then that a sail went up not far from Mescala where a naked mast had been waiting for the change for some hours. A *canoa* with four men on board began a slow journey south, in which direction stood the rocks of the island. The vessel rose and fell as lightly on the small waves as she had when she sailed in the opposite direction. For it is worthy of note that no cannon or weapon of defence other than the arms of the men, weighted her. The breeze being light, the traversing of the course to the island required three hours. It was therefore about the hour of ten, when, under a starlit sky and frowned on by the towering half circuit of the island's promontories, the *canoa* glided into the bay, and silently dropped her sail.

The *jefe*, strained almost to the limit of endurance between hope and fear, had been watching for that sail. Clarita was in the church. It was during the intolerable hours of waiting that a new thought had burst on her. It was doubtless the intense anxiety and the gloomy manner of Rodrigo that had brought that new, black knowledge. In her unthinking fear and her simplicity she had not followed out the possibilities of Vicente's circumstances to their revolting end. But she now suddenly realized that death itself

might be his punishment, that this was Rodrigo's fear. The effect of that thought was to benumb her mind.

The boat had been in the bay scarcely a quarter of an hour when the *jefe*, with the news it brought sunk in his brain, stiffly climbed the ascent from the pier. He carried the governor's message with him. It was written informally and read thus:

"You have done well, a service that shall not die. You have rid the state of a great danger. If I live and have power your reward is sure. There is now but one course, and I wonder that you have not already pursued it without my order, knowing my faith in you. Can there be but one end to a traitor and a rebel? Why do you hesitate? If such men are to live, Mexico is founded on sinking sand. You are to shoot the rebel with no delay. Only one thing I suggest, which you are to do, if you find it practicable. Let the execution take place, not on the island, but in Chapala, Tizapan, Ocotlan, or at least some other place which has given him followers, and is a centre of revolt. Chapala itself, as his own town, is preferable. Thus will the example of his death be held up before the rebels as a warning, not hid in the lake's middle. The moral effect will be trebled. You say his army is scattered. Remain only till you are assured it will not organize under another leader. When this becomes clear, return. If the contrary occur, I doubt not you are capable of dealing with the situation. To prevent further trouble, a show of clemency is now our best weapon. We are in no condition to inaugurate a wholesale punishment. Therefore send to every town a proclamation promising pardon to all such as lay down their arms. God with you. There is happiness in the capital over your victory. When you return flushed with your triumph, we will crown your brow. Till then, in the name of the people of the State of Jalisco, receive my thanks."

The *jefe* came alone to a point half-way between the ascent's summit and the church; and sat down on a rock, dazed. The stars of the low west, where-to he stared, seemed burning red. To him the experience of emotion, happy or unhappy, was bound up with the desire to take it to her, as though the experience and the desire partook of one another's identity. True love becomes a mammoth endeavor to absolutely unite the whole existence with that of the loved one. Recalling this, the struggle that went on in Rodrigo's breast as he sat there with the church and her on his left and the gulf on his right, becomes clear. For a new love is ever half mad. To observe that to share this grief with her in anything like sympathy was impossible — is not to the point. To be sure, she must learn of it. This would be almost to crush her. She would come thus only to bear a sorrow of her own — not to share his. Hence, to unburden his misery to her was impossible, useless, so far as relief to either was concerned. It only remained to communicate the fact, letting each bear the separate grief. But love does not act on such principles. Rather it cuts all down and says: Let us bury this terror by blindly rushing together, *with it*.

After half an hour (which stood out like a jagged rock in the course of his life ever after) he arose, without reasoning or thinking, and went slowly toward the church. Movement cleared his brain somewhat, and a purpose began to form itself. He came to the church door and paused. The first and only impulse to go away came to him, and died. He stepped in front of the vacant, arched entrance, beside which Fortino, heavily breathing, lay wrapped in his blanket. Rodrigo, longing for her and pitying

her, looked in. He knew she would not be asleep. She would be waiting in anguish for the news.

He had expected that he should have to call her out or secure a candle and go in. He was surprised to perceive that, at the church's far end where the altar had been, there was a candle already lit, placed on a stone. And Clarita was kneeling before it with her back to him. In the hour of her need and her dread, the fact that this was a church had been of comfort. He knew she was praying in the silence, there with the light falling on her face, and her *rebozo* carefully wrapped round her head and small figure. He came only half-way in and could proceed no further, overcome. She heard his tread among the ruins, and, still kneeling, turned her head quickly so that he could see her face in the candle-light, and looked at him. She perceived that he was deathly pale, gaunt-looking, standing thus staring at her. He could not come on; he was halted by his mission. So he merely sat down slowly on a stone. That the disaster had come with his entrance was plain to her. She could not arise. That the last weight was falling on her as she looked at him, was as plain to him. So they did nothing—simply remained silent at some yards from one another.

It seemed to him hours that they sat thus, while the candle's flame waved blue and yellow, and the slow-circling stars stared through the gaping roof. Doubtless the time was in reality short. Just as he was beginning to feel he could bear it no more, he saw her sway and fall forward. He was beside her at once, lifting her. As she had been on her knees, and had fallen with her arms under her face, she was in no wise hurt. Nor did she quite faint. Perhaps the very poignancy of her grief prevented her from

losing consciousness. She soon sat up. Much as he longed to, he could not bring himself to hold her in his arms. She herself had, perhaps unconsciously, pushed him a little away.

"Clarita," he said, his voice strained. He paused, and she was not looking at him. "Clarita, I cannot do it. I have decided. I cannot and I will not. I have some little influence. I will write again. I will do all in my power to change the order. But I would not have you hope; for I, I do not hope. Then, at the last, if it cannot be changed, some one else must do what I cannot. This shall never be mine, nor any more battles and cruelties. I shall go away."

"Write it!" she cried, seizing his hands in wild eagerness. "Oh, you will! You will beg for me — you will plead for me!"

"I will do what I can," said he, without hope.

He arose from beside her.

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" she cried, passionately.

He conquered the impulse to take her to his heart and soothe her; and went away. He had brought writing materials for the purpose of sending orders to his troops at Tizapan. He secured what he needed, including a lantern, and descended to the shore of the bay. Pepa's candle in her *canoa* was lit. Her sailors were sleeping among the rocks. Bonavidas's boat swayed near the octagonal tower, anchored a little way out, its occupants seeking rest on the shore. The other of the *jefe's* two *canoas* lay farther off. Rodrigo, having entered the tower, wrote the following somewhat stilted reply to the governor:

"If my past services and my friendship to you may excuse this temporary disobedience to your orders, let them.

Your command to execute the prisoner is received. I do not wish this to be your final decision. I do not wish this man to be killed. I do not think it necessary. That his nature is noble and not that of the adventurer should count for something. It is my strenuous desire, greater than any desire that my life has hitherto borne, to spare his life. As I have broken his power and captured him, may I not, then, plead for him? To execute him would be to lose to the world one honest man, whereas honest men are rare. To spare him will be to give life to a rare soul, which in you would henceforth outshine all virtues and all deeds. He can be taken to Guadalajara, if you have a prison you consider safe. If not, he can be taken to some other city, many leagues away. Let him be imprisoned till you know there is no danger from him. However long this be I shall desire no lighter punishment. And I ask you for this commutation of sentence with my every power of pleading in the asking. My heart is bound up in this request. You speak of reward. I want none, — I can take none, — but this. If you can grant it, your every other order — you know it well — will be obeyed to the letter. If you cannot, I am come to the point of being constrained to say that, our friendship notwithstanding, I must sever our connection. If you must adhere to your order, I cannot and will not execute it. I say this with deference. I cannot and will not. It shall only remain to me, then, to resign my position and to depart. I should leave the country. But I shall be faithful to my trust till this moment come. For, I shall send at once, the wind being now favorable, for all my men from Tizapan. I shall meanwhile be vigilant in my guarding of the prisoner. My troops shall arrive here ready to carry out the dictates of your command, convey the prisoner to Chapala under strong guard and execute him, provided your response continues with the same decision. Meanwhile I shall adhere thus obediently to your order as it is, to wit: My men on this island shall be ever

ready to execute the prisoner. If, before your response comes, there arise any danger of his rescue, he shall be shot here and at once. I shall consider this much due to the oath I have taken before you. Finally, understand me well, if you cannot change your sentence, let there be brought in company with the letter that informs me of that fact an order conferring the power of *jefe* on some one here who can execute that sentence; or, if you do not choose one of my men, let him whom you do choose come with the order. I shall withdraw in his favor. I thank you for those things you did for me. I shall remember our friendship."

His consciousness that he was pleading in a manner exactly opposite to that which had characterized all his former vigorous urgings on the governor, made his sentences somewhat unnatural. That the request itself was abnormal and almost impossible to grant, made them lack strength. As he wrote, the cool night wind swept in at the wide doorways and the waves came and dashed themselves in that old, eternal suicide against the rocks at the tower's foot. When he had written it and read it over, he wrote an order to the leader of the little force in Tizapan to the effect that, provided he were not definitely engaged in the overcoming of some danger, which danger should be immediate, he should secure *canoas* at all costs and hazards, and sail for the island with his men at the earliest hour possible.

This done, Don Rodrigo descended from the tower and found Bonavidas and his men outside. To the astounded lieutenant he told the governor's order and his objections. He gave the last paper he had written, containing the order for his troops, to one of Bonavidas's companions.

"I am sorry," said he, stiffly, "there is no rest for you to-night. The three of you must carry this order to Tizapan at once, while the wind from the north lasts. Make all possible speed. Bonavidas is not to accompany you. He is to remain here, for I shall need him with me."

Wrapped in gloom, Don Rodrigo ascended to the summit, where he stood and watched the vessel go. That *canoa*, being poled round the island to the southern end (where the prison of the two ruined, tunnel-like passages reared its high and black mystery), was pushed out on deeper water and sailed away toward Tizapan. It has already been said that these boats cannot sail save with the wind pretty well in the stern. The breeze, having been found favorable for the journey from Guadalajara to the island, was found unfavorable for a return toward that city. So the sailing of the second *canoa*, which was to retrace that course, was postponed till a change of wind.

In explaining his purpose to Bonavidas, Rodrigo had led that wily lieutenant to a point some distance from the shore, and had spoken in whispers, so that his voice was inaudible to all but Bonavidas himself. But in giving his orders for the journey to Tizapan the *jefe* had stood not far from Pepa's vessel, and, there being no cause for secrecy, had spoken in an ordinary tone of voice. Pepa, as earlier in the day — though now it was burning hate that sharpened her senses, whereas before it had been another and a somewhat better passion — if she saw not, heard.

It is not possible to say what course, under different circumstances, the hatred and vengeance of such a one might have taken. She had lain for hours on the boat's bottom. At times she had been weighed with sorrow or pierced by pain. She had even felt

stinging remorse. She had sunk at times into stupor. She had needed love, longed for, ruined herself for it. She had lost that and herself. At first, even with the revulsion and the hate, she wanted to die. Suicide, however, was an end to which she would never come. Then the hate grew, minute by minute, hour by hour. Revenge was natural to her. Ordinarily one would expect murder to be the end of that hate. Indeed she thought of it, her heart leaped to it. Fascinated and horror-stricken, she almost longed to do it. The nature that could do what she had already done, could not be wholly incapable of that other crime. It is not to be considered unlikely that, had he who had rejected her been of her own race, he would have been compelled to fight for his life, or more likely have been given no chance to fight, on that very night, a night so hate-crazed as it was to her.

But it is not always possible to say that hate is all hate and no love. She doubtless loved him still. Most potent fact of all — he was that white one, he of the other race, he to whom all of her wildness was nothing. Could the knife or the pistol conquer such a one, although it kill him, and satisfy her? His nature still awed her. It had ever baffled her, making her feel that her different battery of powers was ineffectual against that man of another race. To slay, to wreak vengeance, that was associated in her mind with her own personality, was therefore a part of that system which had ever been powerless to produce an effect on him. So she strangely halted at the deed, as though it would not have in it the essence to satisfy her. At all events she would not be capable of any deed whatever for some hours. All was too feverish. Midnight or the early morning would suffice. She would then plan.

She heard him come to the tower and she crept to the boat's end and saw him writing. She could have killed him with ease, for she had her weapon as always. She turned sick and sank to the floor again. After a time she heard him give the order to sail for Tizapan. During the feverish hours pictures of Quiroz had at times presented themselves to her mind. His fierceness, his cat-like cruelty, seemed to her qualities that roused answering ones in her. Quiroz loved her, though she cared little for him. Quiroz would kill, too, where she feared to kill. The dashing, reckless, dangerous course of Quiroz appealed to her, in the hours of hot blood, as the only course wherein she could bury this sorrow, drown or crush this great pain. Who has not felt it — that desire to do away with what is painful by dashing into long dangers? It is possible, had Quiroz been then present, he could have gotten her away. At all events, whatever happened, she suddenly realized that Quiroz was her only friend on earth, that, after revenge or without it, a career with Quiroz was the only thing that opened itself. For to do nothing after these days of fire, was as impossible to her as it is impossible to sheathe a flame and preserve it living. And all the world would loathe her, save Quiroz.

She saw the *jefe* ascend to the summit. She perceived he had left all his writing materials in the tower, even left his lantern burning. He had forgotten them all; he had forgotten the tower and that which had happened there. She saw an opportunity to communicate with Quiroz. The vessel about to depart could not come back before to-morrow night at earliest — probably would be away longer. She did not believe Quiroz would have returned, as yet,

to Tizapan. He could come here later in another vessel. She would not, could not, depart with Clarita, that pure and grieving reminder of her perfidy. She could not go alone. Quiroz could be duped, at least, into getting her away. Beyond that she did not think. Meanwhile her plans for revenge could mature or die. She hated as recklessly, here with the wind blowing over her, as she had on the boat's bottom. She saw a plan clearly. If she should nerve herself to the terrible deed, let it be done on the following night, or when she should see Quiroz's sail at hand, have Quiroz's *canoa* in which to leap and escape, and Quiroz's approbation and daring to lend her firmness.

All this was the product of but a moment's thought. She was at once in the tower. She heard the soldiers preparing to embark. To do so one of them must wade to the *canoa*, then pole it in. So she was allowed a short time for her purpose. She wrote thus: —

“Doroteo Quiroz: As you hold my heart, so I love you. You are wondering, where is this wild one? A resolve came to me to try my powers on the obdurate *jefe*. I wanted, where you had failed, to win him and his troops to this our great cause. I was idle and wasting time. I cannot bear to be idle. I said, I will win this other force and this leader while Doroteo is away. I am on Prison Island and he is here. He is weak-hearted and no man for us. He will not join, though I have urged it long. And I curse him as do you. So come for me. Come at once. I have no other means of return. I await you, to go with you. To the earth's end or to the sea's bottom Pepa is yours.”

She hastened out of the tower. She could not trust this letter to the soldiers. She awoke one of her own sailors, one of those Fortino had picked up

The man was ready to do anything for money. She paid him and assured him Quiroz would pay him more. He was to go to Doroteo's house and wait till he should see the message in that warrior's hand. The man agreed. He went to the soldiers and, with some trouble, secured passage. They thought he was deserting his ship. Pepa casually informed them that she had given him permission to go, for she did not need him. So they finally took him; and when the vessel sailed out toward Tizapan with Rodrigo's eye following it into the shadows, it bore Pepa's letter concealed in the sailor's loose white shirt.

The night passed and the day came. It was afternoon before the more ordinary wind from the southwest came up. Three soldiers then departed with the *jefe's* other *canoe* for the shore and Guadalajara. The boat in which Fortino and the girl had come, and which Pepa had been occupying, was now the only vessel at the island.

Clarita and Fortino prepared a silent and gloomy breakfast, dinner, and supper on the shore by the tower — *frijoles*, a little pork, some *tortillas* and sweet bread, and fruit. Clarita barely touched food. Even Fortino had no appetite. He was wondering what he should do now. If the girl would stay must he, then, sail away and bring her provisions till she would go? Well, he could do that. She had never thought of the running short of food. The *jefe*, she knew, would care for her. She thought only of Vicente. Pepa came to one or two of these meals, and ate a little more heartily than did the others, but with her eye, dark and burning, cast out over the lake, seeing nothing that was real, seeing only visions, the form and the import of which it was well

her companions knew not. Pepa was as she had never been before, and it was as though the spirit of tragedy walked with her.

All that day the prisoner paced the floor to and fro. The calmness of his face had given place to a strained look that had in it an unwonted sorrow. He too saw visions, deeds of the long ago, crimes and monastery walls. He was waiting, too, for Pepa. Surely she would come to-day. Every hour he thought he heard her footstep. Why did she wait — why did she not come to comfort him? Noon came straight into the cactus-choked *patio* and he saw her not. The afternoon wore on and he was restless and oppressed, with the meaning of the coming night scarcely bringing an alleviation of the weight. Evening approached and she had not come. What was it, then, that she had sailed here to do? Why did she not come to him? He argued at length that they had not permitted it. He fought against the shadow of his old unreasonable doubt. At nightfall, she not having come, he groaned within himself and cried:

“What are my hopes — what is my faith? What soul cares for me or would see me free? My birth was black; let death come to me black as my birth. To whom can I trust my freedom? For she came not. Yet to her I must trust it — there is no other.”

Again night came down on the lake.

CHAPTER IX

THE unexpected had occurred on the lake's southern side. This was not the first time that a force so easily and quickly raised, had vanished as quickly. The personal power that holds men together and produces enthusiasm, being removed, dissolution may be immediately at hand. An army needs a head to hold it together. It falls to pieces without it. Most fatal fact of all, it was believed among that scattered band that Vicente had been long since lodged in a Guadalajara prison, and that nothing but storming and taking that great city could rescue him. In the cavalry that had fled there was not one born leader. No one of its number had the genius to gather it together again for that super-human deed. Doroteo alone possessed that genius.

But bitter failure had met all the efforts of Quiroz. He had ridden out from Tizapan reasonably sure of returning with a not inconsiderable body of troops. He knew almost every man of Vicente's army by name. He knew the dwelling-places and the probable retreats in flight of the chief figures of that scattered band. They had learned his bravery and received not a few attentions from his adroit flattery. They were dissatisfied with the hard life peace had led them. He would give them views of bigger game even than Vicente had held out. He went forth, too, with the determination to promise plunder and win allegiance in the old Roman fashion.

Probably the only matter in which Quiroz could have fatally deceived himself was in that of other men's belief in him. That ordinary minds should come to suspect his sincerity was a supposition not easily lodged in his brain. Perhaps this may be called his greatest weakness—that he was too sure of his ever ready deceit. At no other point would he have been vulnerable, watching all his armor with a lynx' eye. But there was under the smooth politeness of this gambler a vanity that was somewhat of an enormity. That those churls who had fled should suspect him, was therefore not considered possible by him. But such was the case.

He rode from Jiquilpan to the mountains, from mountains to lake, from village to village. Having occupied some days in the search, he found the scattered ones. He whispered his plans privately in many an ear. He gathered a little band of those who had followings and appealed to them with all his art and his earnestness, and with all his lies—a speech that a Roman indeed might have been proud to make. He found deaf ears and eyes cast askance at him. Rebuffed, he scoured again shore and mountain. He urged, he pleaded, he called forth the full battery of his powers. He found the scattered army determined not to follow him. He once more secured the presence of some of the chief men at a spot on the shore and made his last mighty effort, of promise, flattery, scorn, deceit. They became exasperated. They broke out finally and told him the truth. The real leader, said they, he who should be king, was captured. They could not rally round Vicente. They would not go wildly after another to support a baseless project. The army lacked its head and its purpose. They looked with little faith on a course across

mountains to that distant City of Mexico where the central government held powers unknown. And finally they told him plainly they had no faith in him. The true perpetrator of that treachery in Tizapan, was not altogether unsuspected. With that they sullenly departed.

So the matter was hopeless. The game was lost. Quiroz was for an instant stunned. But he rallied at once. After all, these were not a notably fierce people. For the most part they had lived a sufficiently quiet and primitive life. It had been the particular influences that worked for Vicente that had roused them. When Vicente was captured, the blood of the enterprise was let out. And if, finally, they suspected him, he knew the truth of his failure. After one bad hour of dismay, his natural quickness of intelligence showed him how fatal was that suspicion. So, with a lasting bitterness and a somewhat novel lack of his old suave manner, he returned to Tizapan.

All his old desperation became sharpened and invigorated. He was becoming even abnormally reckless. He would risk his head on the first chance and wring by sheer desperate force some kind of compensation from that fortune whose wheel had ever been his god. At least he had the girl. He would dash away with her to the southeast. There lay his arena. Let him loose his leash of devilish powers in that pot of intrigues and battles called the City of Mexico. He would wrench success up by the roots. If he now was, in the game, down to his last coin, let him gallop away with the girl, stake it on the red indeed, play his last mad play yonder where the great game was fiercest — and win much or lose all. He cast maledictions on the lake and the state wherein it lay and, with them, all past associations.

He grew hotter in exasperation and eagerness as he approached his home.

He entered Tizapan in the night and did not find Pepa. He searched the place for her with a brutal vim. Some one said she had sailed away in a *canoa*. Then was it that rage was born in Quiroz. He would then have thrown fortune itself away to grasp the girl. His mother found him fierce and fearful for one awful hour. That poor trembling lady deemed her son gone mad, and with devout assurance (a certainty no visitation from Heaven could have moved) blamed that strange Señorita Josefa Aranja for all this misery. Then Doroteo was suddenly himself again—he was never otherwise for long—become calm, cool, keen, graceful as of old. He was determining to cut his way through all earth's powers, steadily, remorselessly, and secure that vanished woman who had ever been to him like strong wine. He was secretly gathering his courage; tempering, for the relentless pursuit, his spirit—as it were, trying its edge and ringing its metal as though it had been a steel blade.

It was then that, in the early morning, Pepa's note was placed in his hands.

Pepa herself, on that day, in the midst of her many visions, dreamed at times of Quiroz's success. He would gather up the troops. She finally decided he could not return to Tizapan for several days, perhaps would be occupied by his task of reorganization much longer. Her time of vengeance was instinctively postponed.

About noon, when the wind had changed to the southwest and the *canoa* with the message for the governor had departed, could those on the island have seen the Tizapan river and its marshes they

would have perceived a vessel poled thence into the lake and a sail raised. But Tizapan was too far away. At most the finest eye could have detected only a faint spot of white, the sunlight barely glimmering from it as it floated yonder on the distant waters, whose vast waste, yellow in the midday sun, circled it about and bore it like a still and tiny jewel.

Josefa Aranja grew, toward evening, chilled of soul. For she must not be looked upon as of that proverbially heartless, murderous, Mexican-Spanish nature, which kills with ease. If she should ever come to the point of killing that white foreigner, it would be after passing through many fires. Finally, she dreaded the deed; it sickened her. She remained cold and silent. Life for her rotted.

By the afternoon's middle that tiny white spot was a very little larger and a little whiter.

The night, the same Vicente had seen come with despair, and yet in which he hoped to make his escape from that place of gloom, came on. The sunset was one of those seldom failing ones of beauty that are the lake's chief charm. The visible universe was, for an hour, steeped, suffocated, drowned in red. The mountains seemed melting in that deep, incarnadined flood of light. The lake flowed living blood. The sky was a vast dome of blazing crimson.

The tiny spot of white had reached and passed the lake's centre, and was less tiny. It turned, in the new light, from white to red, and flashed that color back to the west like the flashing of the red wing of a distant bird.

About eight o'clock, when the night had come indeed, Clarita, bearing with her, as always, her sorrow, yet with a new emotion growing in spite of all deeds within her, chanced to be walking by the shore

at a point about half-way between the octagonal tower and the island's southern, prison-crowned end. The path was among great rocks, and well concealed. The heights of the island towered over her on the left, the lake's waves beat on her right. She had been near the door of her brother's prison all day. She had spent the hours in suspense and loneliness. After trying to eat a little by the tower (the Mexican supper is always late) she had wandered here, letting the night breeze blow over her face, watching the stars, gathering some little peace from nature, the only possible source, before she should return to the church for the night.

She could dimly see the forms of a few soldiers on the upper crest against the sky. She believed she recognized Rodrigo himself, more than a hundred feet over her, walking slowly along the island's upper edge and blotting out stars as he went. Only the sky enabled her to see. She on the ground and so far below could not have been detected by those above. She watched that moving figure with pain and longing. His very vigilance was her grief. She recalled that habit she had seen in him of slowly patrolling the whole edge of the island thus every night, sometimes arising from sleep to keep his own eye on his realm's boundaries. The figure disappeared.

She walked on, and there was a shadow moving there before her among the rocks. She stopped, holding her breath. The shadow was still likewise. She believed that she had imagined it. This rugged way leading to nothing was surely deserted. She walked on, a little afraid. The shadow suddenly came out from behind a boulder, and, showing itself to be the crouching figure of a man, came before her and held out something white in its hand. She was so

frightened that she turned and ran. Running, her vigilance for Vicente, her readiness for every chance to help him, made her suddenly imagine (in her brain that was ever imagining escape and ever seeming to receive messages from him) the very thing that proved to be true. She made herself stop. She turned, and the shadow was before her. Her fear increased, so that her limbs shook. But the fact that there was a chance, however slight, that the message came from the prisoner (her woman's mind unreasoningly and at once grasped at that chance), made her determination not to run away as moveless as rock. She took the paper, and the shadow was gone, to be seen no more.

She ran then, terror-stricken now that the danger was over, and came to the *canoa*. Pepa was not there; she was half-way up the ascent seated on the rocks alone. Fortino was in the tower. The *canoa* was anchored very near the ruins of the pier, so near as barely to be safe when the waves dashed it toward the rocks. Pepa had had it brought thus with purpose. She could then, when it floated to its chain's length and was nearest land, easily leap to its stern from the elevation of the pier. Yet it could not come so close as to strike. Clarita, naturally timid, was growing bold. She could not wait to make that long ascent to the church for a light.

She came to the edge of the pier. The waves dashed spray over her. The vessel came swaying toward her, borne on a billow, and was brought up with a jerk by the anchor chain, the stern near her. She nerved herself and leaped over the narrow chasm and came safely into the *canoa*. She found the matches and the candle, made a light, and with trembling fingers opened the paper. She saw with blind-

ing joy that the writing was his. Her brain swam, and she could scarcely read. The first word halted her. It was "Pepa." But could she be blamed, in her great love and her longing, for reading on, when the words were his and she would do anything to help him? She could no more have stopped at that word than the breeze that lifted these billows could be turned back in its course. She devoured the lines with an eagerness that was pain. They were these:

PEPA, — There is a means of escape. At ten o'clock to-night bring the *canoa*, you and Fortino, with what secrecy you can, to the southern end of the island; anchor it as near shore as possible, with the anchor ready to be immediately lifted. It must be directly under the southeastern corner of the prison that stands on the southern end. If my life is of value, fail me not.

VICENTE.

She realized that she must lose no time. She came to the boat's end to leap out. Before she could do so Pepa stepped across the chasm and was beside her. The older girl had seen the light. It was suddenly clear to Clarita that, though she still had that old distrust of Pepa, the boat could not be secured and removed without Pepa's knowledge. The latter, too, was too shrewd that Fortino and Clarita could hope to carry out so great a project and she be ignorant of it. Lastly and most weighty, Pepa was wonderfully cunning, bold and strong to perform. Her help would be invaluable. Vicente, by this very note, trusted the whole to that girl. Then she, too, could and must trust her. She gave her the note, explaining how she had received it, and Pepa read it.

When she had grasped the significance of this communication, for one long minute the great eyes

of Josefa Aranja stared into those of Clarita, while the boat rocked and the candle-flame sputtered in the wind that swept under the thatch. That minute decided Pepa's course and her vengeance. The dread of murder fell from her like a black and heavy cloak, and her heart stood out strong and free, relieved, bounding with exultation, — as though she had been committed to the crime, bent down by the thing she must do, and was suddenly given liberty. To her credit let it be remembered that her greatest joy in the deed of the night was that she would not now be led to do a worse one. What could have been more fitting to her wishes, to her hate, than this? She had sacrificed Vicente for him who had not received her. Now, in the latter's fancied security of possession, to revenge herself by taking away the very thing she had given, and scorn his scorn and baffle his vigilance and laugh her contempt to the night wind as she sailed away with Don Rodrigo's prize, — more than this, to thus undo her treachery, repent of the deed that had been loathsome to her, by the deed's undoing, and save thus some faith in herself and some honor from others, — oh, then did her whole life revive, and decay was no more, and the blood in her veins was full of the fire of that sweet revenge!

She bade Clarita wait till she should bring the giant, and then she leaped out to the pier and was gone.

That sail that had been the tiny spot of white near Tizapan, and had turned to red in the lake's middle when the sun set, now that the darkness had come was invisible. It might have sailed on toward Chapala's towers, or swerved a little and be now yonder on the course to Ocotlan. It might be coming on, too, straight toward these rocks to which no com-

merce came, and round which no fisher dipped his circling net; so that, had some lightning flashed out of that clear sky, it might have been seen, grown larger and turned white again, sailing on, sailing on.

Scarce a minute elapsed (a minute of the deepest anxiety to her who remained in the rocking *canoa*) before Pepa returned and entered the boat with the giant. The three, like conspirators of old (ah, strange trio ye! with what differing hopes and fears and purposes, each borne on, like every other of the race of men, by the varying waves of your hearts' emotions!) — the three crouched down on the boat's flat and heaving bottom, and out of that curious union of interests the plan was born.

"The greatest danger," growled the now gleaming-eyed giant, in whom the news had aroused a joy so awful that his observers were astounded at it, "is this: That infernal *jefe* makes the circuit of the upper shores at least three times every night. You say he might be absent at the moment, — but I, wreck that I am, believe it not. The devil that haunts Fortino and drags me under his hoofs will bring Rodrigo to that very end when the time comes. I know it — on my soul, I know it!"

Pepa, during the last of this brief and hasty discussion, had sat in a profound revery. She now looked up and cast her deep eyes on each in turn. Then she laid her fingers, much as Quiroz might have done, on Fortino's shoulder.

"Listen, friend," said she; "you are right. There is the chance of the failure, though it be small. But there shall be no chance. I shall not accompany you. Go you with Clarita. Slip round the island in the dark with the vessel. Do you your duty. Think not of me. When the anchor is raised for the last

time, fear not," and a deep sadness suffused her eyes with tears. Who could read that intricate mind, still less the untamed but love-torn heart? "Fear not; if I am not with you, I shall be where best the time suits. Friend, go on. Leave this *jefe politico* to me."

They demurred. She was obdurate and she was capable. Her help thus was needed. They agreed. She leaped out to land, and disappeared. It was after nine o'clock when the anchor was finally raised, and, with but two occupants, the boat glided in silence out and thence along the shore. It was well that the night was dark and that there were no soldiers immediately at hand. But the chance of being seen was always a living chance. For one man to pole a *canoa* among waves is as nearly impossible as anything that might be done can be. But if any man on earth could do it, Fortino could; and he did, putting out all his fisherman's skill and his great strength, inspired by hopes that made every inch of his huge body tingle, dreaming of this glorious redemption of his great loss, this resurrection of his dead repute; dreaming most constantly of all, with homely honesty, of doing this momentous deed for the man who still believed in him.

The sail that had been the white spot and the red spot was still invisible. Wherever it should come to land, whether it be at Chapala, or at Ocotlan, or under these precipices, it would sail straight at the rocks in silent boldness, appearing suddenly, looming out of the night like a scudding spirit.

Rodrigo was striding to and fro in the gloom on the island's top, buried in thought, passing and re-passing that larger square tower that stands between the two prisons. His course brought him at times not far from the edge of the precipitous descent that

overlooked the western shore. He was alone among boulders, cacti, and the ruins, there being no guards near him. Toward ten o'clock he approached that western edge for the tenth time, on the point of continuing his restless course round the island. He suddenly caught a sound, other than the sighing of the night breeze. It was a soft and unwonted sound, such as these solitudes seldom heard, half a sob, half a moan. It came from among rocks that clustered in shadows a little inward from the island's upper rim. He paused in wonder, looked, and perceived a little gleam of white among the boulders. He came nearer.

It seemed there was a human form lying supine upon the flat surface of a stone, its face turned toward him, but partly hidden by its arms. Half he recognized it, and was seized with an unreasoning dread. There was a second moan. He was too much of a man not to answer that distress. He came quickly and silently close. He saw it was Pepa, flung down there alone; her hair loose and scattered over the rock; her arms, half bare, hiding her eyes, so that it seemed that she did not see him. She moved a little and turned, as one in long, dull pain stupefied. Remorse struck deep in his heart. He stood over her, and spoke her name unsteadily:

"Pepa!"

She threw her arms back and left her face bare, staring up at him with eyes whose light the night could not obscure, yet than which the night itself could not have been blacker. She looked at him as though she did not readily recognize him. Then, with a start, she arose, ran a few steps, and stumbled and fell. In real agitation he was beside her.

"Pepa! Pepa! What is it? You are hurt!"

She half arose, but sank back.

"No," she said with infinite wretchedness in her voice. "I—I hurt? What is there, man, that could hurt me? No, no; Pepa is well—happy. Why do you haunt me? Why can I have not even solitude, which alone is left to me?"

"I will leave you if you will," said he quickly. "But you are in pain, and you have fallen. You do not believe me so brutal as to be unmoved by this. Come, for the last time and sincerely—is there not something that I can do? At least stay not here and thus, or my unhappiness is grown beyond endurance!"

"Do?" said she dully. "What is the word, and what does it signify? Don Rodrigo, the doing is done. The crime, the throwing away, the death. You, who are still alive, speak of doing—say it not to me. I have died, Don Rodrigo. Why did you come and why have you spoken to me?—me who am dead—dead."

The pitiable tone of the words tore his heart. He believed for the moment that she was losing her mind, at least was so stricken by grief that she knew not what she said.

"No, no!" he cried. "There is life and hope for you. Despair, girl, is not for you. It cannot be! You are too young. Rise from this blackness and blot out my face from your memory."

"Señor, you speak words. It is you who are young, who feel not, who love not. Do you think, then, that weary old thought of all the weary world, that age is measured by years? Have you, then, in all your life of freedom and adventure, never, never sat you down and thought, and discovered in that thought that time is a lie, that there is no time; and

only the beating of the heart and the birth and the death of its emotions bring age? Ha! — young! Then is God young! Señor, I am older than these rocks, and the ruins of this wall, though they have seen and known such pain and sorrow in the times gone by as wrung tears out of stone, yet, looking on me, surely must weep again. You who scorn me, would call me incapable of remorse. Yet have I last night and to-day burnt with it till it was as though my soul staggered and fell, black ruins. Go away — leave me. If still there be left that in my heart that can bleed, let me bleed alone.”

“I will leave you,” he said bowed down. “I can say no more. May God be with you. May God be with us both.”

He turned to go.

“Yes,” murmured she, “alone. Leave me with that which I must do. Your way will be darkened by me no more.”

“What do you mean?” he cried, turning back, frozen with fear.

“Then you do not leave me? Come — Oh I am mad! Señor, if your mind still is whole, pity the wreck of mine! Why — you are still here? Did you not go? I saw you last, señor, at the tower. Grief has made me this poor way. I would have crawled after him. I think I did — I crawled over the stones — stunned, crying. I held out my arms to him — ah, I remember, it was then my mind first was black.”

“Pepa! Pepa! — Oh my God!”

“Why — are you still here, señor? Will you not, then, leave me? I cannot do it if you are here.”

He stooped down beside her and, seizing her arms, bent his eyes on hers, striving to call her to herself.

"What is it," he cried with a desperate sternness, "that you are going to do? Listen! Look at me! I compel you to tell me!"

"You are so fierce with me," she moaned plaintively, like a child who is cold. "Yet—I understand—gentleness is not for me, though I be very hungry for it. Love is not for me, though my heart die for it. Señor—please, please go away—for the time is coming. Please, please go away!"

At these mad words he was wrung with a torture such as he had never dreamed possible.

"Oh broken heart!" he cried. "What can I do!"

"Do?" said she suddenly, after a moment's silence. "There is nothing for you to do. *Ay de mi!* You have done it all. Don Rodrigo, do not fear. I am come to myself again. I tried to bear it. I did all I could. But there was something in the blackness that laughed at me—and I fought with it till it came and crushed me. I can feel no more. I knew when it came dark I had failed at last, and must not live. I cannot. So I walked away thinking I would come to the water. Don Rodrigo, I gave you all, my love, my faith. You were not able to give to me—anything. So to pay me only a little, can you not do me this one favor. Leave me and let me do it. I cannot go walking on in these ruins."

"You shall not," he cried, "you dare not! With my soul's strength I forbid and I shall prevent it. Kill me first. I am here and I give you my arms and I pray you kill me. For this you must do before you can kill yourself! Listen to me—"

"The mad cannot listen, and I am mad. I say it plainly. I have felt reason going, was happy that I felt it. Oh señor, to break one's heart once is much too often; to live is to break it anew with every

thought, in every moment. This lifelong agony you would decree to me. Holy Mother Mary! thou too hast gone from me! What—only this man here? Señor—then will you not leave me? Go away—the last time I plead with you. If I had a heart I could tear it out and cast it down and cry, Take it; trample it!—but leave me! Señor, I have no heart. Then for the deed's sake—please, please go away!”

It seemed to him clear with a deadly clearness that this strange woman's mind was sinking under her grief. He was filled with horror and a self-loathing that made him panic-stricken. He leaped to seize her, crying:

“You shall not!”

She was up, seeming tall and strong. Her eyes, like those of a maniac indeed, glared fire at him out of darkness. That look for a second disarmed him. She wrenched herself with one quick effort from his grasp, and crying out crazily, brokenly, ran away, leaping the stones like a wild animal. She was at the edge of the precipitous descent and he came on with all his speed and desperation after her. He perceived that she plunged down over boulders and amidst cacti. Being in that moment at the edge, he could barely see the black shadow of her figure going on, zigzag, leaping, disappearing, rising again, skimming over that perilous course as though wings held her.

He knew the descent was full of danger even in the day, but he did not pause. He went down after her, crying to her. He sprang from rock to rock, wounding himself but going on. Boulders loomed before him and on every side. The high shadow of the island itself now towered behind him. He was half-way down amidst a chaos of shattered stone,

plunging on where one false step would have been fatal. Before him the girl's form went lightly, swiftly, and the lake, unseen, beat its waves under her. He saw failure before him and the night for evermore gashed like a wound in his life. He called aloud shrieking it:

"Pepa! Help! Help! Stop her in God's name!"

He dashed on blindly. Others had heard his cry and came, some running along the shore from the tower, others descending after him. He was near the bottom. He was leaping to the last boulder before reaching that narrow track that separated the ascent from the water. He could just see her spring from the shore with the agility of a panther over a wide stretch of heaving water, to a rock that stood alone in the lake. She sprang yet again from that to a second farther out. She did not pause. She sprang yet a third time to the last boulder far out where the lake was deep. The spot was not far from the island's southern end and the ruined prison of tunnels looked down on the scene out of its years of gloom. Rodrigo was over the first stretch of water and on the first isolated rock. Others, being nearly all those few soldiers who had watched the island's southern end, were running to her aid behind him. He jumped to the second rock and saw her figure disappear. There was the sound of the fall of a body in the lake. He came, and his comrades came, to the high flat summit of that last boulder. The water beat against it and surged in darkness about its base. There was no woman there, or arm stretched up out of that unspeaking flood, or hair that floated on the waves.

The place was a wilderness of water to the west, and a wilderness of rocks toward the shore — rocks

that cut off the view in all directions, and were buried in unfathomable gloom, among which the billows played, retreated, advanced, hid, and shattered themselves. Some of the soldiers dragged, some scanned the shore and the lake, some called for a boat, and a fruitless search went on.

CHAPTER X

IT was not with bounding hope — in spite of a will to hope — that the prisoner began the operations of the night. It was rather with a sense of coming disaster that made his mind and his manner sombre. So soon as it was safe and he had no other interruption of guards to fear, that is, a little after eight o'clock, he cautiously raised the lid to that unclean passage.

He lowered himself, taking his candle with him, and closed the opening. He traversed again the tunnel, crawling in places, gathering earth upon him, and seeing the white evidences of unknown miseries of the past flash out of cave-like recesses as he went. Whatever of agitation the events of the preceding night and the news born from them had caused him, there was none of it left to render him too hasty or too slow, or his foot or his mind unsteady. Had one seen him as he pierced that underground passage, the candle light on his face, it would have seemed that the dreamer had grown taller; that his mien was one of a reserve that meant power; and that some unmeasured gloom was in him which rendered him calm.

She had not come to see or speak to him — and the day was gone. He endeavored to blot this fact out of his mind, but it took refuge then in his breast. Having earlier pondered this, and all the circumstances of his condition, he had come to the inevi-

table conclusion that in her lay his only hope. He could rely on the discretion, as he could on the silence, of the mute. That messenger, ignorant of the identity of all of Vicente's friends, could be directed then only to deliver the message to Pepa, whom Vicente believed to be the only woman on the island. For her the mute could easily detect. There would be no slightest chance of a mistake, and there ought to be none. He could not say to the mute: "Find a giant and deliver the message to him." For the night would be dark, and Vicente recalled that Bonavidas likewise was a large man. Hence he girded up, as it were, his faith in the girl, and made his first decision final.

He came to the steps under the southern prison and mounted. Half-way up he perceived that other narrow exit, a black slit among boulders, leading down through similar blackness to liberty. His blood leaped with no joy, nor did he tremble. He went on up, calmly, and emerged in the hermit's cell.

The eyes of that death-stricken aged one were as though they had been long staring at the spot where Vicente's countenance appeared. The mute was seated in the farthest corner on the ground, his hat pulled down over his features. He made no move. The fire leaped once more into the hermit's face, which looked ghastly pale, having assumed that extreme of emaciation that seems often to come suddenly. He stretched out his hand and cried with a sickly joy:

"My son — you are come at last!"

Vicente stood over him and looked down in a deep meditation. He passed his hand, then, once gently over the hermit's wasted features.

"Write it!" gasped the sick man. "Write the

message and send him. And tell me," clutching at Vicente's arm in feeble but thirsty eagerness, "tell me your hope and your energy are high. Tell me you will secure this night freedom for all time and the army again shall be yours!"

"Father," replied Vicente, "to this course am I committed. To this shall I cling till the end come. There is nothing else in the world for me. There be some not born for the world. It is possible I am one of these; but let time answer. The army will follow me again, as it followed me once. I can gather it up where any other would fail. So, if there be truth in the vision of my founding yet a government that shall be strong and a power for good, fear not. I shall wring that truth out of that vision, and your heart, be the world or the grave its resting-place, shall have peace."

"It has it," gasped the hermit. "Go — write."

Vicente walked to the table, sat down on the bench, and wrote with a curious leisure. He arose and went to the mute.

"Get up," said he.

The mute obeyed and turned up a face wherein the exultation was for a moment visible, but which, on the hermit's suddenly crying out, seemed to stiffen. Vicente, towering over him, laid his hand heavily on the dumb man's shoulder and held the other's eyes with his own.

"Go you," said he slowly, making the words clear and distinct and weighting them with command, "down to the lake. Follow the shore to the right and keep yourself ever hid. Search for a woman. If she is not there she may be in a boat, wherein you are to look with all your cunning and your caution strained to the utmost. You are hunting, under-

stand it well, a woman. There is but one here. Search, man, till you find her, if you must upturn every rock on this barren isle. And you are to let no other see you. When she is found you are to give her this in secret. That is all."

The mute took the paper and instinctively turned toward his master, whose eyes had been blazing through the writing of the letter and the delivery of the command, and whose weak old body, even weaker than on the previous night, was again half raising itself.

"Go!" cried the hermit, his voice husky and breaking. "I am weak of body, but my mind is your master still, you who taunted me in that old time. And my mind shall follow you this night, for on this mission have I set my spirit. My weakness left you free two whole days, and that freedom starved me so that I now die; but, liar in your soul, I won you back and you are mine still. And if on this night of my great hope, you dare to think—ay, so much as think freedom, I will crush you down on that very spot where the thought is born. Go on—I will follow—I—I—"

A fit of coughing that seemed to rend his body, suddenly attacked him, so that his weakness appeared incapable of enduring more and his form, now seated, swayed and rocked. Vicente seized and held him. As the coughing abated and the old man gasped and groped with his lean hands, that evident and striking failure of his last strength bore its fruit in the mind of the slave. The dumb one, looking on first in terror, then with a deep and infernal cunning, let his face show plainly, daringly, for the first time, his joy at his master's coming dissolution, his defiance, his savage sense of freedom as the master's mind sank

toward death. All those emotions came out on his revolting features and, as it were, stood there and smiled or glared.

The hermit saw them and the fact of his now, on the grave's brink, failing in his long work, seeing the crushed rise up, swept in on him. It produced an effect as appalling as it was sudden. Despair turned to rage so great that it burst all bounds. He wrenched himself from Vicente's grasp and tottered up. He was convulsed and torn with that mighty anger. He stood for one second tall and lean and trembling, glaring at the crouching figure before him. Some mad emperor, in blasting wrath about to trample his people, would have looked thus and not more dreadful. He staggered forward, with clenched fist and flaming eyes, a demon withering the human form that dared not escape. The effort was the hermit's last. Its force consumed in one instant the vitality that might have lasted him for hours. Vicente, awed by that spectacle, had not time again to seize him before his tall and emaciated body collapsed. It fell with complete and final ruin, barely arrested in its fall by the arms of the son who leaped to sustain it.

Its despair and its rage alike were dead — as were its memories and its hopes. Its powers of spirit and of mind were gone. Yet, not absolutely. For the force of that wrath bent the mute once more into a subjection which, for a space yet after his master's doom, would live; and in that last subjection, even as the master fell, the slave slunk away down the stairs into the bowels of the earth, on his mission.

Vicente, even now not thrown into excitement, but weighed with a grief he had not anticipated, gathered up the form, a strangely light form, and placed it on the couch. He sought stimulants and adminis-

tered them. He chafed the body. He worked long and rapidly—to no purpose. He brought the candle then and looked, haunted, for many long minutes into the face. Behind those features had lived his own source of being and his destiny. The eyes he now closed had held that power that bent men, and won his mother's wayward heart—and failed of all good. The face was grown calm. It was absolutely white, and in its lineaments and its whiteness Vicente saw himself and knew his life as he had never known it before. His brain swam with memories. The shadows of the cell were the figures that acted out his father's tragedy. The future to him was only some strong, sad force that led him on, him, the helpless, the fated, to an untimely end. He sank to his knees and wept, but without tears. It was then that the mute returned and the prisoner remembered his promised liberty. He arose and bent his eyes on the messenger who had crept in more awed by that last effort of his master's mind than Vicente had ever seen him.

"Have you succeeded?" demanded the latter.

The other signed yes.

"Did you give it to a woman, and in secrecy?"

Yes.

"Then come. We will wait below."

Vicente took up the candle. The mute had cast a glance at the couch. He had looked away as though he dared not glance again. Then, a second time, he had cast his eyes thither. He was like a dog that scents a dead body and is fascinated, yet repelled; drawn, yet terrified; half approaching, yet slinking away; the knowledge of dread full on him, yet deep under it the animal instinct to come on and rend.

Vicente, turning with the candle perceived that canine glare. He walked to the couch and did the last small offices of arranging the hands and the blankets. He stood yet another moment and looked for the last time at the face.

"Come," said he, and turned, walking toward the exit. "We will go. This shall be his tomb."

He began the descent and the mute followed, leaving the dead man there buried, he of power and of failure, of great love and greater sin.

They left the stairs at their middle and entered the fissure between boulders. The descent was without steps and steep, and the passage as narrow as low. Vicente himself would lead, though he did not know this tunnel. It was cut irregularly through earth, swerving aside frequently to avoid the rocks. It went ever down so that all the height of the island was speedily left above. They emerged at last from the black hole of the exit. That hole was so small they must crawl through. On one side of it, without, and extending some distance in front of it, stood one of the many boulders that line this shore. On the other side, and extending across so as entirely to hide the tunnel, grew one of those clusters of cactus that towered and spread and straggled in many directions. Between the cactus and the irregular wall of the precipice was left a narrow passage leading round the island's shore under the bluff. Following this path over stones and among other cacti with the island's wall on the right and the lake on the left, one could come at length to the bay and the tower, having passed on the way the spot where Mendez met Clarita, as also the spot where, a little later, Rodrigo and his men looked for the body of Josefa Aranja.

There was also room left or rather cut by the mute, between the cactus that hid the tunnel and the boulder on the left — a path so hewn through the prickly plant that masses of that plant still extended beyond the boulder's edge, leaving the tunnel's mouth invisible from the lake. The spot had evidently been selected with much cunning, there having been no haste and little cause for secrecy in the hollowing out of that unsuspected way.

Vicente, halting the other, passed thus between those wing-like concealments of boulder and cactus and emerged with caution at the shore. The lake beat up but a few yards lower than the passage's exit and some ten yards distant from the island's abrupt wall. There was a small cove there which rocks left somewhat of a harbor. Waves coming from the southeast could beat straight into it. But those from the southwest, or any other direction, were halted by the line of rock. As the wind came on this night from the southwest (indeed it does so on the majority of nights during the dry season) the cove was left comparatively calm. He perceived a boat could be brought without danger very near the shore. Having learned the ground he crept back to the tunnel's mouth. The mute was ordered to remain concealed and in no wise to meddle in aught that should occur. Vicente sat down in hiding and, without suspense but in gloom, awaited the hour.

There was being borne in on his consciousness at length some faint hint of a moving shadow, barely other than the night's own shadows, yonder due south on the face of the water. It wavered and rose and fell, was large and then suddenly small, as though a cloud glided over the waves or some spirit walked there. He did not know whether his imagi-

nation, rendered too alert by the strain of the night, called up this unreality, or whether the shadow were a thing real. He was straining his eyes to that otherwise blank south and hearing the waves beat up, when another sound broke on his ears — the soft plash, plash, of a pole near the shore.

A moment more and the great hulk of Fortino's *canoa* appeared indistinctly, shrouded in gloom, to his right. It was cutting the billows, indeed staggering somewhat among them, as, unsteadily propelled by that one strong man, it hugged the rocks and rounded, in imminent danger of wrecking itself, the last of the boulders. It wavered and sank and rose before him who saw his freedom come thus shadow-like out of shadows. It turned slightly, and turned back, wheeling irregularly, refusing to enter the place of calm. Fortino himself could be now indistinctly descried high up on the side near the stern, his body bent far back as he strained on the pole putting forth a supreme effort. He conquered the waves; the *canoa* came into the tiny gulf and felt the heaving water grow quiet under her flat bottom.

She rode in absolute silence nearly to the shore, struck without noise on sand, and stood, her pointed prow high and black and sharp. For the first time tingling eagerness was born in Vicente. He was ready to seize that second and be gone, swallowed up in the lake's night. He turned to draw the mute from his concealment, not forgetting that creature whom he pitied. The creature was not there. The prisoner dared waste a fraction of the precious minute to search the hiding-place; the dumb one was not found. Vicente ran to the passage's mouth and a little way up. Neither was he there. Time was too priceless. There could be no more delay. It was unlikely the

mute, if later found by the soldiers, would be severely dealt with. He was left to his fate — unfathomable product of crime and sorrow clinging to captivity. Vicente crept to the shore and was at the vessel's prow, raising his hands to draw himself in. It was then that a girl's form leaped out and was beside him.

"Pepa!" he whispered, bewildered by this movement.

She was closer to him. She seized him round the neck with both her arms. He saw and felt that she was littler than Pepa, and he knew the quick smothered sobs. He was dazed. He seized her and pressed her to him in the secret darkness.

"Clarita! Come — there is not one moment to lose. I will lift you back in the boat — help me! What is it!"

She was pulling back.

"Go on!" whispered she, pushing him frantically to the vessel, from which he had a step withdrawn. "You are free. I have helped you. This is enough for me. I cannot — at last, Vicente, I cannot go. I am safe!"

"What do you mean?" cried he, feeling failure close on his track. He dragged her after him, but she tore away. She put her face close to his and whispered, impassioned:

"Rodrigo has been good to me. You are safe. Kiss me! I shall love you always — the change is come — Oh! you understand — my place is here. And thus I can get him to let you go!"

He comprehended that trembling confession, comprehended it half with sorrow, half with joy. But he had faith in Don Rodrigo, most of all, faith in Clarita; and there was in him little of selfishness.

"Then good-by!" whispered he, pressing her to his breast. "God be with you!"

She crept away and he leaped up to the boat's prow. The figure of another girl, running along the shore out of the darkness, swept past the spot where Clarita drew aside invisible. That other slipped in between cactus and rock. She was panting barely audibly. She sprang out to the water's edge at the cove where Vicente, bewildered, was entering the vessel over the prow and Fortino at the rear still strained on the pole. Her clothing was soaked and clung to her strong young body, pouring water in a score of little streams to the earth, having, indeed, dashed spray from her flying person all the way as she came along that hidden path under the island's bluffs. Vicente was once more astounded to see that wet figure coming in after him and feel the dripping arm brush his face.

With a last glance, half fearful, half exultant, Clarita perceived the boat begin to move. The night was yet as silent as the prisons, save for the lonely sound of waves. She did not see that other spirit-like bulk of gloom that had stalked yonder from the south. To her the change had come at last, and with it tears. For the first time in all her life she would not follow him. Not again would she walk through the dark night to find him, or cross the stormy lake unbidden to be where he was.

She waited to see no more. She ran swiftly round the island's end to its western side, and traversing in a kind of panic the course the dripping Pepa had traversed, came to the rocks that had hidden the swimmer. She ran almost fully into the arms of the remorse-crazed Rodrigo, who, having failed at the point of the leap, was running here, scanning the

shore. It swept over Clarita that this haste meant pursuit of her brother, at least suspicion, that the secret would out, that on her alone depended the safety of the fugitive. She hesitated not one moment. That latent spirit of deeds came up. Rodrigo had declared his love — her brother was free. She loved this man with her whole heart; she knew it now in the moment of her anxiety. Her modest timidity went down in the storm. She, the gentle, was suddenly as wild, as bold, as ever had been Pepa in her freest times.

She cried out as he would have passed her:

“Rodrigo! Rodrigo!”

She cried it passionately. He turned, and she, blocking his way, stretched out her arms and he caught her. She held him in the embrace of desperation. She wept and called his name; she threw back her face, which, thinking that some great trouble had come to her, he kissed, beseeching her to tell him.

“I can bear it no more!” cried she. “You love me — you said you loved me!”

“With all my life!”

“Then take me! Take me!”

Doubtless in the paroxysm of emotion that, like a maelstrom, had suddenly seized her, confession of itself would have broken out. She was swept away in the bursting storm of that which her secret heart had longed to utter. The stratagem was but the hundredth part of the moment's deed. It was merely that it could fall in with the storm. Curiously did stratagem and reality flow on together, the last sweeping in the first. Ah! thou timid one, thus thy great love made thee, too, that unusual deceiver, with that unusual and sweet deceit that was truer than truth.

There came then, ringing through the night, the

distant cry of a man's voice, "Help! Help! He is escaping!" and the report of a pistol.

She had detained Rodrigo one invaluable minute; even she could detain him no more. He listened, startled; then broke away from her.

The *canoa* bearing the fugitives had begun its silent gliding out as Clarita had run away. It was but a few feet from the shore when the waves caught its stern, whirled it, in spite of all Fortino's strength, sidewise, and, for a moment, hung it motionless on the rocks. The giant ground out between his teeth such oaths as the night must have shuddered at, and Vicente, seeing that his life hung on every second, was high up beside him, his slender figure, too, straining with all its power on the pole. It was then that they heard the cry and the pistol, whose ball struck the water under them. There were no other boats at the island. Escape was yet possible.

When Rodrigo had called his men to the pursuit of Pepa, Bonavidas, on the island's extreme southern point, had not heard the call. Seated under the prison's wall he was watching that shadow yonder in the south. The sound of the grating of Fortino's vessel came suddenly to him. He crept half-way down the precipitous descent and the scarcely seen movement below aroused his fears. He cried out and fired to determine his course and raise the alarm, not aiming at the vessel. His fears were confirmed by the struggle beneath and, with a devilish zest, the wily lieutenant plunged into the danger. When nearly to the shore he hung from a rocky ledge and dropped. Then he leaped at the boat, crying aloud. He had seen one huge and one tall figure high up against the stars on the struggling vessel. But he, too, had been seen.

His descent, since the alarm, had taken but the eighth of a minute. It took that frantic giant but two seconds to intrust the pole to Vicente and the girl and spring from boat to water, from water to land. On the edge of the shore he met the charging lieutenant. Fortino's only thought, mad and blind as he was, seeing his great hope threatened, was to crush this howling demon. He sprang on his astounded enemy before that enemy could raise his weapon. They were locked in a deadly embrace. Bonavidas's long and powerful arms entwined that great bulk and wrenched fruitlessly. The giant's muscles were in sudden and irresistible play and with a dull, sickening crack the body of Bonavidas was crushed against his iron breast. The time occupied in this silent contest was infinitesimal. The disease that had secretly gnawed the lieutenant's strength then showed its works. It was as though the lungs were, by that bear-like grip, mangled. Floods of clotted blood burst from the victim's mouth, and he fell, blood running still on the sand, — and lay dead.

Cursing in his throat gutturally, the giant, now inflamed with fury, ran through water straight at the boat, and hurled his form against its stern. It was like striking it with a boulder. It scraped and swung free and circled out amidst greater waves, Fortino clambering, as it went, over its side. They were dashed by billows fifty feet into the lake; they heard shouts and running feet upon the shore.

"With all your strength!" cried Vicente; and the wind caught his voice and made a hideous clangor of the words.

The two swung on the pole, Pepa crouching under them straining at the rudder, striving to guide the vessel straight out.

"Up with the sail!" cried Vicente.

Fortino loosed the pole and the vessel tilted and swayed. It was then that bullets began spattering the water and they heard Rodrigo's voice crying orders on the shore. The sail, hoisted by Fortino's great arm, its ropes seized by Vicente, went fluttering up, caught the wind with a dull report, and dragged, bulging, at its mast. The flight under the white square began, round the island's eastern side twenty yards from shore, toward the spot where lay Ocotlan, the wind directly in the stern.

Exultation was suddenly turned to horror. The thing that had been the spot of white and red in the long afternoon, had been, too, that ghost-like bulk that strode in darkness from the south. The three fugitives, crowded together in the stern, crouching to avoid the bullets that now went wild, bending every effort to the management of sail and rudder, beheld then a second expanse, looming out of the southern darkness, towering over them, bearing straight down across their bows. They cried and shrieked in vain. That silent enemy sailed on. They came, in spite of all effort, in front of its prow. It was as though the white sail became a dazzling sheet to wind them in and cast them down. The prow of that new enemy, bursting in on the moment of success, crashed against their vessel's side.

The phantom bore with it Doroteo Quiroz. He had heard the cry and knew who alone could be escaping. He had been still in his desperate mood; and the escape of him for whose capture he had risked all, frenzied him. Let not that skeleton arise out of the tomb to goad him. Thinking this, he had heard Vicente's voice and seen the vessel rolling out on to the lake's bosom. He had borne down on it.

Coming very near he had heard yet another voice, a voice that seemed to make every drop of blood in his body stand still. It was Pepa's. She, too, was escaping and with the very man they had pawned their souls together to destroy. Burning thoughts of treachery burst in his mind. It seemed then everything he touched fell in ruins. Crazed by that last voice, he hesitated not. He crashed straight into the traitor's ship, heedless of danger or death.

His vessel was the "Goddess Venus" manned by three of his own sailors. She had no iron on her, and she struck her opponent at a spot of the latter's side most firmly braced by heavy cross timbers. So she did not pierce her. The two *canoas* shook and tottered, but remained whole. Quiroz sprang to the prow and hurled his anchor into the other vessel. While the fugitives struggled to prevent that disastrous union, Quiroz called his willing servants to his aid, seized the chain, and the vessels were drawn together. They wrapped the chain's superfluous coils round a staying timber, so that those two small and tossing ships were lashed like galleys of old.

Vicente was not armed. All weapons had been removed from him on his capture. He had stood at the point of conjunction ready to sell his freedom with his life, infuriated for once by the presence of this fiend of treachery. The girl, at the sound of Quiroz's voice, lost her daring for the first time before any save Rodrigo. She slunk into the boat's farthest corner and looked on, no party in the fight. Vicente's was the coolest mind of the three. It would have been better had Fortino's been cooler. The moment the anchor caught the ship the former sprang to cast it loose. Fortino, a maniacal purpose born in him, strangely prevented that separation.

But what reasoning, what earthly force, could stop the dread hurricane of that great man's passion when, in a fury that no words can describe, he realized that this, his last struggle with his destiny, was failing because of that same wretch who had brought about his miseries. He cried out with so fierce and so deafening a cry that it was as though some king of the forests, leaping on his prey, roared in him. He hurled himself across the chasm between the two prows. He launched that vast weight of his straight at his enemy — all thoughts, all purposes, all hopes, dead, save just this one, to crush the vile soul out of its viler body.

He seized Quiroz in a grip of iron. He called forth the sum of his powers. He was a demon from the fiery pit. If breath of man could blast man Quiroz must have shrivelled before that hot exhalation of supreme hate. The traitor felt his body pressed till it seemed the crushing arms must cut him through. His ribs seemed cracking and the blood felt as though it burst from his veins and flooded him. He would doubtless have gone the way of Bonavidas had not his three sailors, themselves strong men, been there to help him. They were with one accord on Fortino. One seized a club from the boat's bottom and beat the giant's defenceless head unmercifully. The attack of the others was not less fierce. The boat was rocking under them and the other dragging at its chain, and the two sails, left unguarded, surged and flapped as the *canoas* wheeled contrary to wind. The fight lasted scarce time for Vicente to perceive its nature. He, too, was on the point of springing across and adding his despairing strength to that of Fortino, when he was pushed back from the spot where, for

an instant, he was poised on the boat's side. His assailant was one of the sailors, who, knocking Vicente backward into the vessel, jumped in after him.

The struggle with Fortino was done. It is likely that even four men would not have proved too many for his towering strength, had not an unforeseen circumstance aided them. He had grown, in the contest, even more crazed than before. In the grasp of his three assailants and still holding Quiroz, he had lunged and tottered. The mass of men had crashed into the thatch, torn that light roofing from the sides, and shattered it. Even the mast itself was all but cracked. The sail then united its efforts with those of Fortino's enemies and caused, with their strength, his failure. The wheeling of the vessel had left the canvas empty of wind. It sank, flat and flapping, and wound the plunging giant in its folds. He knew not what he did. He loosed one arm for a moment from Quiroz, to tear the cursed thing down. It confused and hampered him. Its sagging end, the rope unguarded, tangled his feet. That loosing of the arm was fatal to success. Quiroz, with the others' aid, jerked himself loose. With a dexterous twist the canvas was more thoroughly wound about the frantic combatant.

It was then the unarmed Vicente was hurled back. Quiroz and the two other sailors left Fortino, who for an instant could not free or collect himself. They sprang into the other vessel. Vicente was in the midst of the most desperate fight of his life with the first of Quiroz's servants. The two following ones joined it, overpowering the dreamer. Quiroz, losing not a second, at once on entering that vessel and before Fortino could come storming to the prow, cast away the anchor that bound the two *canoas*.

They staggered again at this release, and swung apart. Fortino was charging over cross-timbers, having freed himself. He was an instant too late. He was baffled so ignominiously that the last of his heart and its courage were wrecked. He saw the other *canoa*, containing Quiroz and his three assistants, Vicente and the girl, tossing yonder, himself here alone in Doroteo's vessel, and an impassable gulf of black and heaving waves between. He sank down in despair.

The other *canoa* was at once righted by Quiroz and his men, and headed to the shore. Vicente, overwhelmed by numbers, though having fought with unflinching bravery, was pinioned in the prow. The sail, bulging again, hid the stern from him. High in that stern sat Quiroz, grown calm and steely. He stared at the girl. She crept up to him, kitten-like, and, resting against him, put up her face.

"Did you think I was leaving you?" whispered she, bringing her lips close, close. "I was only getting away, the sooner to come to you!"

He tried to read her face.

"Pepa, are you telling me the truth?" said he between his teeth.

"I would not lie to you," she replied plaintively, bringing her lips still closer, so that he felt her breath on his face. "Doroteo, I would not lie to you to save my poor soul."

"Then you are mine at last!" cried he, holding her an instant with passion. She crept away and crouched under the thatch.

The shore was at once neared and the vessel anchored, yet not so close that those soldiers who came running there could detect the identity of its occupants.

"Deliver him to the *jefe*," whispered Quiroz to his men, "and say not a word, but return here."

So the ill-fated prisoner was given over once again to that chief of police in whom the escape had caused a relief as great as transient. The three sailors returned to the *canoa*, answering no queries. That vessel, containing still the girl and Quiroz, was poled out free of rocks, the sail was raised, and the journey was continued. Its master wished to return to Tizapan, but this the wind would not permit him to do. He would not remain on that island. He hated every man on it; he had obtained what he sought. He would sail for the opposite shore and return to his native town when the wind should change. So that square of canvas that had been the white spot and the red, and the spirit-like shadow from the south, went away to the north and disappeared.

The despair of Fortino was infinite. For a full hour his vessel, he the lonely occupant, tossed at the will of the waves. The sail caught the wind and dashed the boat about, that it was nigh to sinking. It lost the wind and fell and flapped in laxity. The prow now cut the advancing waves, now turned and ran from them. The waters flowed dark and deep, and he knew death lay under them. He dreamed a long bitter dream of Ocotlan, Tizapan, and the Island. He was haunted by ghosts and ridden by black morbidness. The sky was a pall over him, the lake a grave under him, life blacker than the grave. He would have leaped in but for the profound contempt of self that made him punish himself by not doing so. The high rocks of the island yonder cursed him. His own soul rose up in revolt and cursed him. He died a hundred deaths, and felt a hundred other

dooms bring their weight and mercilessly unload it on him.

The night progressed and the silence of the infinite was about him. In every direction lay the same unpierced gloom. He went at last to the stern. No more fights, no more efforts for him. He was the lowest of the low. To fish — this was all — merely to drag helpless, tiny things out of water in a net — this was all that might fit the impotent Fortino. He righted the sail and worked the vessel round till its prow pointed as nearly toward Chapala as the wind would allow. The canvas filled and bulged. The breeze was thus not well in the stern and his course was slow. He sat by the rudder and held his ship remorselessly on its way. Seldom, seldom has a sailor sailed these ships alone. He went on into the very deep, blank middle of that gloom. He left the island. He could see no rocks behind, no shore before, no mountains to the left or right. Thus empty was all time to him. He sailed in the gloom, queer old Fortino, swallowed up yonder alone, seen no more, lost in the waves and the night.

At midnight, or shortly after, the underground passage not yet having been explored by any of the soldiers, there was struck a light and lit a candle deep under the prison of tunnels. The yellow flare lit up the hermit's cell, the stones, the couch, the body; also the revolting visage of the mute who had lighted it. He had spent two long hours of what trembling, what terrors, what fearful visions who knows? — creeping up the length of the tunnel he had made, halting and sitting crouched for long minutes in dread, then creeping again. Coming at last into the cell's absolute darkness he went with

stealth and secured the candle and the match. Then moisture, cold, came out over his whole body and he sat down in the blackness. He bent his eyes toward the spot where stood the couch and dared not move. He was thus many minutes more. Then the fascination drew him on and he lit the candle. He crept over the floor to the couch. He stared at the calm countenance. He put out his hand and withdrew it. He put it out again and felt the body. He passed his fingers to the face. He could not believe it. There was no power—there was no mind. He brought his own face closer. He passed his finger over every feature. He knew the truth. He dropped the candle and it went out. He crept to the exit and down, and came at length to the shore. He went a little way along the water, arriving at a line of boulders that extended into the lake. He climbed to the first and looked once back at the passage. He stepped to the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth. He was far out with the billows round him and deep water under him. He raised his arms high in air. And he—he, the mute—brokenly, imperfectly, the words made by but half a tongue and that half long paralyzed—cried out in a joy diabolical:

“Free! Free!”

He leaped and sank, and was seen henceforth no more. It was thus that he followed her.

CHAPTER XI

IN the middle of a bright and hot afternoon when the green and red walls of Doña Manuela's home were rendered even more than ordinarily luminous by the brightest and hottest of the sun's rays, that anxious señora's son, with Josefa Aranja, entered the street door and appeared once again in the tree-shaded *patio*. The interior of this, his ancestral home, was as peaceful, as full of quiet and shadow, as could have been even that domestic life for which the old lady believed him by nature fit. The footfalls of the two arrivals woke sharp sounds from the brick pavement. The trees barely stirred and fell again into the afternoon's yellow depths of sleep. The shattered door of the rear *patio* had been removed, and there was a lack of promptness or of inclination or of will in putting up another, for the rear court, dusty and bare, lay visible. The door of the room Pepa had occupied stood open, and looking in, they could see the unseemly hole in the outer wall and through it catch some gleams of the sunlit street.

They traversed but a scant half of the distance to the low roofed *corredor* before there was again the wonted vision of the loose blue dress. Its occupant, with a cry that may have been joy, or only anxiety, ran out of the glazed parlor to meet them.

"Doroteo, my only son!" cried she, falling upon him. "Oh! the bitter hours that I have not slept

or eaten! My boy, you are come at last, and this time, oh surely — tell me this is the last time!”

“Aha!” cried Quiroz, fondling a stray lock of her hair; “you are right, little mother, this is indeed the last!”

“Thanks be to Heaven!” responded she fervently.

Josefa advanced with something of the solemnity seen in her at times before, and with lines a little harder about her mouth and a far-away look in her eyes. She kissed Doña Manuela on both cheeks, and was at the same time on both cheeks kissed by her, after the elaborate Mexican custom. Then the old lady, struck with a sudden thought; turned in agitation to her son and whispered:

“Are you — is it — Oh, Doroteo! It is already done? Are you then — really — married, Doroteo?”

Quiroz laughed a somewhat sibilant laugh and went walking with his old feline air under the tiled roof, where he sat down in a cane-and-leather arm-chair.

“Ah, yes, *Mamacita*, ha! ha! So we are, with a bond of steel. Set your heart at rest, *Mamacita*, we are married, Josefa and I.”

“And the good times,” cried she, clapping her hands slowly and doing it, too, with a solemn face of doubt, so that the joy of that clapping of hands was hollow and without merriment, “the good times have come!”

She was not able to talk much during the rest of that afternoon. Her brain and her heart were exceedingly full. She went about doing many things restlessly, looking askance at the silent Josefa or following her son with fearful eyes. And he was himself again, graceful, full of life and suppressed spirits. Doña Manuela clung to the idea he had

come at last to settle down. She cherished and hugged and warmed that thought, not so much as daring, any more, to say anything about it, merely in trepidation waiting to see. Later they ate a supper which, save for Doroteo's run of comments on many subjects far from the thoughts of all, would have been rather a silent one. The old lady tried once, during that meal, to be jocund, and said a thing very full of merriment, and declared, too, that Doroteo was at last, now fights and bad influences being away, like her own son, the son whose nature and whose needs she knew through and through. After that saying the merriment pined with curious rapidity and died.

The darkness had come on and was whispering among the trees in the *patio*, and the candles cast light out into the shades of night. Unusually early they all agreed they were weary, and retired. Doña Manuela withdrew to her room, a great depression on her, not having dared ask or say more concerning the subject nearest her heart, not knowing where her son had been to-day and yesterday, whether he would remain with her or go away on the morrow. She spent the night before the crucifix.

In the morning she found Doroteo busy with horses. She was struck dumb and said nothing, nor expressed surprise. She summoned him to breakfast. He kissed her with great gallantry and called her *Mamacita*, but said he and Pepa had had breakfast. The *mozo* brought two horses into the *patio*. One of them bore a side saddle. Then the old lady, standing motionless in the *corredor*, her white face blank, heard Josefa singing the snatch of a tune in her room. The singer came out. She was in a high-strung mood. Her eyes danced and the color came

and went in waves on her face. She came and kissed the old lady on both cheeks again.

"Good-by — good-by!" cried she, in odd and feverish happiness.

"Good-by," whispered Doña Manuela.

Doroteo helped the girl to the saddle with needless care. Then he turned to his mother.

"Little mother, God with you! Fear not till Doroteo comes again. We will not leave you alone forever. No, no! *Mamacita* is ever in the memory! Farewell!" and he kissed her and held his finger under her chin, "till we come again to settle down!"

He mounted, and they rode out, leaving tears running down Doña Manuela's cheeks. When the door was closed she went in and stood up on the windowsill from which Clarita had seen Vicente gallop up the street. She watched them disappear, Doroteo sitting straight and handsome as only Doroteo could be, and Pepa, the proud Pepa, staring away to the front and the wild future in the warring southeast. It was then Doña Manuela's doubts of Josefa Aranja were verified. The two were presently gone, leaving the house and its swirls of red and green desolate, not having so much as turned to wave a hand at her.

She did not blame him. Nay, she forgave him. How many times since the old sacrifice at Jerusalem has the cleansing of sins been thus renewed, the mother washing them away with blood from the very wounds that the son inflicted! She turned back to the empty house and came at length to the parlor, where the glazed bricks glistened and the broken pieces of the crystal *chirimoya* still lay amidst the other shining fruit. She stood in a dream.

"He was never thus by nature," murmured she, pitifully. "Oh, Holy Mary, thou dost know it was the woman who did it!"

And in that sweetly bitter thought the sins of Doroteo Quiroz were wiped out.

The morning of the day previous to that of Quiroz's return to Tizapan a straggling fleet of some twelve or fourteen *canoas*, gathered not without trouble, went down the river amidst the waste of green marsh, and issued on the lake. Those vessels contained the remainder of Don Rodrigo's men, who sailed out in high spirits. Scarcely was there one *canoa* from which did not float over the dancing waves the tones of some Spanish love song, or the high and plaintive falsetto of some weird Indian melody. The steady breeze of an autumn day blew this company of sails ever toward the spot where, a dead leaf in a sea, the island lay. The long morning and the longer afternoon passed, the fleet neared the rocky shore in the early evening, and the soldiers saw the prison walls standing gaunt against a sky of many colors.

Clarita, sunk into yet greater grief, had spent the whole of the night after the great failure lying on the ground outside the door of the prison, wherein a se-curer cell had been selected for the captive, and a constant guard placed over him. They would have allowed her to go in; in the morning they besought her to enter. She could not. Rodrigo, nigh crushed by her sorrow, held aloof; he would not break in on her solitude, though she had given herself to him. The two, bound together yet separated, were waiting for the governor's message, each with fear, neither with hope.

During the day the wind changed gradually to the southwest, finally to the west, so that the approaching fleet, having come within a few hundred yards of shore, could come no further. It was forced to anchor where it was. The soldiers were thus compelled to remain in waiting *canoas* till morning. But to one other vessel, a lonely vessel from another direction, the change was advantageous. Chapala lies, as has been said, on a cape. Between Mescala and the former town the shore makes a turn, almost of a right angle, so that Chapala lies west of the island, as Mescala lies north. The messengers returning with the governor's reply perceived, at Mescala, that the more usual southwest wind would likely prevail during the afternoon and night. They therefore did not await the improbable north one. They skirted the shore, leaving their *canoa*, and came, toward evening, to Chapala. They secured there another vessel, and set sail for the island. The wind changing and coming at length directly from the west, and, as always, rising with the night, the journey was made with good speed.

At nine o'clock that night Rodrigo, grown considerably calmer than he was wont to be, his teeth shut and a grim determination forcing him on, came to the prison doors where he had last seen Clarita. She was not there. The guards told him she had gone away. He came again to the church. He did not look at its stones, and he kept out of his mind by a mighty effort the other scenes he had been a part of in it. He stared straight before him, and strode in. She was kneeling again, a candle near her. He came to her and spoke, standing over her and looking down. She started up and turned an appealing face to him, reading his expression. She had steeled herself for

this moment. It was as though she held her every nerve with a desperate grasp. He said:

"The message has come. I will bear your sorrow with you—I must. You have given yourself to me. To hold aloof because I was the unwilling cause, this will serve no longer. Clarita, I am come to be, henceforth, always, regardless of the blot on me and rising above it, the help that you need. I will take you away. I shall not let this grief blast all your life. For him, there is no hope. The governor, in his weakness grown for once by irritation strong, will not be moved. Come, oh my heart! you, this I know, have forgiven me long since. I may have done wrong—I do not know—I did the best I knew. Will you come now and give me this grief of yours, as you gave me your love, and let me, now that I can do no more, bear it for you?"

She came and bowed her head to his breast, and he held her.

"Go now," said he at last, "and speak to him."

She went out, slowly. The gray *rebozo* fell and lay in the ruins. He picked it up and went out after her, going down to the shore where he gave orders. He called a soldier, handed him the governor's message, and turned over to him his own authority. He saw that the *canoa* was ready. He returned and waited at the prison door.

The girl, scarcely able to go, had crept in. The guards had let her pass and she came to his cell. She turned bewildered at the door and stared at the cactus and the walls. She tried to go in, but she fell against the ruins and stood there with her face buried on her arms. She did not know whether minutes or hours passed. At last she turned and entered. Vicente was standing by the candle listening, as though

he had heard her silent footstep. He saw her appear, standing looking at him, agonized, her love for him going out and drawing him. He sprang forward and caught her. He drew her to the light and put back her hair from her face, at which he stared. He read her message. He did not tremble or cry out. He heaved a deep sigh and stroked her hair, and then smiled at her.

"I think you came to tell me there is no hope," said he.

She shuddered and sank more deeply in his arms.

"Look, Clarita—to me it is not this great grief. Then to you it shall not be. Do not weep. That which God brings is best. Death has not any terror for me. This have I long seen coming. It was the destiny prepared for me."

She clung to him, desperately, grief shaking her frame. She could not look at him. She could not raise her face. She could scarcely hear him. She must hold him—hold him.

"I cannot go!" she cried in anguish.

He held her closer, pityingly, being stronger now than in all his unusual course.

"You love Don Rodrigo," said he.

"He has given up," she said. "He did all to save us—he is going away."

He looked at her hair, in which the candle-light brought out gold. He looked at her shaking shoulders and put his gentle hand on them. He drew her up and kissed her many times.

"Then you, too, go," said he. "Death is nothing; faith and love, these are all. And you have been these. This, your life, will light the way for me to the end. Go in peace; grieve not. You have done all that you could. Remember I met death with

calmness and did not complain, because your faith had strengthened mine."

She would not go. She clung to him with a grip he could not loose. After holding her long he tried to lead her to the door. She seemed overwhelmed by the fear that he would make her leave him.

"I cannot!" cried she again, turning her face up to him. "So long as life lasts I shall stay with you."

"Clarita, you must leave me, because I ask it. This is the last you can do for me. If these sad times had not come, and I, still living with you, had become ill and then died — you would not have been crushed by grief for that; you would have trusted God and gone on in the world till a better time. Think of it thus now. You will walk out to-night, leaving me because I pray you with my last prayers to do so. It will be that you left me already dead, that I have gone before you. You will not think of the death and the sorrow, nor of me as living here. You will think only of the future."

She had ever obeyed him — his wish had been unquestioned law. To do so now was a new struggle. She only shook in his arms, unable to obey.

"I have followed you always!" she cried.

"Heart of faith," said he, "this last gift I pray from you. You will not refuse it. To stay would be only to blacken the end for me, whereas, remembering you thus as having gone away when I wished, there will be light. Go — in my name and for your love of me. It is not desertion of me. I know you would stay. It is my will. This is your last, your most sacred duty. Go."

When she could realize it thus, she began to yield, but not till then. He succeeded at last in getting

her away. He gave no sign of the pain of that parting, he did not so much as flinch at the wound. She staggered out, held by a guard, seeing nothing, unable to go alone — and she left in him a loneliness that seemed as if it must of itself bring death.

She was caught up outside by Rodrigo, who carried her to the shore as though she had been a child. He brought her into the vessel and gave orders to the sailors. To do nothing but grieve over those events and that end, to feel remorse and hate himself — these were not worthy of him. Let him bring all his emotion, now that he had done what he could, to bear on caring for her. He turned his back upon the island and the prison and the past. He faced the future with her.

He had arranged a bed on the boat's bottom where she might pass the night. She lay there all the hours of the journey. He stood over her, or strode to and fro, or scanned the horizon as the vessel sped on. He rested not.

The island was sunk in the past blackness and the lake's northern shore came near. The wind in the early morning brought them to Ocotlan.

She had recovered a little and they proceeded on horseback to Guadalajara, where they were married. Rodrigo communicated with none of his acquaintances, merely made the arrangements for departure. They took passage in one of those great, old-style *diligencias* that, drawn by eight mules, whirled them away over many stony roads to the east and north. The nights were spent in inns, sometimes at towns, sometimes in lonely places. They were transferred to other *diligencias* and the days were dusty and long. But his love sustained her.

There came a sunlit morning when the sluggish

waters of the sand-blocked Rio Grande rolled before them. They walked to the shore and some rowers were coming toward them in a boat. The high bank hid them and they were alone. He put his arms about her and said:

"I have found all at last — all. And for my many mistakes you give me yourself as reward. Clarita, I am going to make you happy."

"You will," she said; "a little while longer and you will!"

The boat came and they entered and were rowed across. On the way the sun came and glistened on her tresses.

"I think it was your hair," said he, "that won me first — and the dimples."

She looked at him and smiled for the first time, a sad smile. But the dimples themselves had come again.

CHAPTER XII

ON the afternoon following the departure of Clarita, a lazy *canoa* dropped sail and floated to the sandy shore at Chapala, poled by one very lean and tall man whose bare legs as he strained along the boat's sides seemed of immoderate length, and by another man who was shorter and who grunted as he strained. The boat came to anchor near that portion of the beach where the lime-kilns stand at the rear of the church. The two sat on the side, then, and swung their feet over the water.

The long one made a movement as though to jump in and proceed to shore, but grew of a sudden so very languid that he found the movement could not be completed. He yawned and retied about his waist a green sash which separated the white blouse of his shirt from the white rolls of his trousers. He leaned against the thatch and let his eyes wander over the town and the sides of St. Michael. The other sat beside him, held a sandal up, and stared vacantly at it as though it needed something but he had forgotten what it was that it needed. He too yawned. The color of his sash was magenta. The two then sighed in harmony and, removing the two high-peaked sombreros, let the breeze fan their faces. Apparently the idea of disembarking must be given time to gain ground. There was a great bulk sitting yonder on the sand with its back to a hut. It did

not move. Anastasio's eyes had slowly taken in the place of his nativity.

"The church towers are still the same," said Anastasio with sentiment, moving the large toe of the left foot slowly back and forth.

The other assented only with silence.

"I see the *salati* is not changed," observed Francisco after some minutes of the silence.

"The old place is doubtless lonesome," said Anastasio.

"Run down," agreed Francisco.

They deemed it unnecessary to proceed further with this line of thought. Later, when the languor seemed really to approach exhaustion, Anastasio felt in his bosom and drew out a rag, which, being slowly untied, displayed three copper cents. Anastasio appeared bored by the sight. He put the rag and its contents back in his shirt. He perceived Francisco, after some time, removing a rag likewise, and opening it. There were not any cents at all in Francisco's rag. This sight seemed extremely fatiguing to both.

"Francisco," began Anastasio, having looked long and dreamily into the water.

"*Si*," said Francisco.

"There was something wrong with the spoils."

"It was in the book," said Francisco in irritation. "If what's in a book is n't true, then," and he gave a large gesture with his hand as defying anybody to answer so masterful an argument, "what in the devil is?"

"Is everything in books true?" queried Anastasio.

"Why," cried Francisco, some of his old excitement reappearing, "what else would it *be* there for?"

This proved unanswerable and Anastasio sank into apathy, merely observing:

"Anyhow, there was something wrong with the spoils."

"It was Fortino," said Francisco. "Fortino did n't know much history, nor did he concentrate. The secret of history is concentration. Fortino scattered himself—I mean his mind. So the strategy got him."

This not seeming particularly lucid, Anastasio let it pass. He observed presently, however:

"It looks to me that he concentrated too much. He concentrated the whole army. This is called good strategy."

"But I tell you, fool," cried Francisco, "that it is the mind. The mind rules wars!"

"*Pues, bien*; let it go. Is your rag entirely empty, brother?"

Francisco spread it out flat.

"*Si*," said Anastasio, "there is nothing in it but your honor. Wrap it up, wrap it up; you rode hard for it. Come, you and your honor, you may live with me on my three coppers."

"Till the fish are drawn," assented Francisco.

"*Si*," said Anastasio, "we will return to them. The fish are more lucrative."

The great bulk yonder on the sand moved a little sluggishly, in the sun, and his sombrero fell lower over his unseen face.

"Poor brother Fortino," muttered Anastasio to himself.

"*Si*," said the other, "he failed to concentrate."

The afternoon advanced almost in silence. The small waves beat up murmuringly on the yellow sand. The town slept on in its primitive peace. The serried line of mountains cut their eternal jagged line

against the sky's blue. A dove in the old *salati* sent her mourning notes out over beach and water and the song seemed the voice of nature. St. Michael lifted his mass out of the town's very centre, and cactus and shrubs half hid his rocky sternness. There was no sign, no thought of war. The place was almost as it had been three hundred years ago.

The light on the eastern waters was suddenly intensified. The languid eye of Anastasio and the alerter one of his companion perceived a dozen sails or more, reflecting the sun's rays, glistening, dazzling, glide one by one round the point of the cape from the east. The unwonted sight moved Anastasio to curiosity, Francisco to wonder. The bulk by the wall of the hut arose and stalked slowly, sombre, to and fro, its eyes fastened on the ground. The fleet aroused the town, and men and women in crowds appeared running from the streets to the beach. Brilliant blankets and fluttering *rebozos* crowded the water's edge. But there was no laughing, no noise. There was only awe.

The purpose of this sudden arrival began to be whispered about. Already the deed had been anticipated. Francisco leaped to the water, his brown, dripping legs flashed through it, and he ran along the beach to the largest crowd. Anastasio still reclined against the thatch. The last of the sails came round the cape. The first vessel, the second, the third, anchored at the beach. The sails one by one fell and were furled to masts. The great Fortino strode yet, slowly, ponderously, to and fro before the hut like one in whom restlessness gnaws the vitals. The townspeople still came running. The first *canoa* discharged its freight of soldiers. The second, too, gave forth its line of men. The third and the fourth

did likewise. The soldiers drew up in order on the beach, the evening sun casting their shadows long across the sand. Fortino still strode yonder. A lion, the fierce life crushed in him, strides thus to and fro in his cage.

Only the last sail glistened on the lake's breast. It too fell and was furled. The ship under it floated to the beach and the guard landed. There was a double line of soldiers forming an alley, waiting for its chief occupant. The crowd held a little aloof. Vicente came out and stood on the beach. He was straight and fearless, but the sorrow in his eyes struck deep into every heart. The soldiers marched, he in their midst, into the main street and through the plaza, and the crowd, straggling, followed him.

Fortino strode yet upon the shore. His face was dark. His hands were clenched. His eyes were the eyes of despair. He would not look up. He would not leave his beaten track.

Anastasio, having at length come to land, walked slowly, hesitatingly, to the giant. The latter's back was toward him.

"Brother," said Anastasio.

Fortino turned and cast his dull eyes on him.

"Brother," said Anastasio with odd kindness, "you will still share the fish with us — no?"

The old red gleam appeared for an instant in Fortino's eyes.

"The fish — the fish," muttered he. "*Si* — oh my God! We will share the fish. Fortino shall draw the net till his last day come and his sun set forever. Pitiable is he that he ever left. I will draw fish, and to him that buys of them let wretchedness come. My food shall be ashes in my mouth. Let the air round about me choke him who breathes it —

let the waters where I row turn to blood behind me. *Si*— fish — fish — this is all. But I shall not fish up that which is sunk forever. And let that which I draw, henceforth, wherever it be sold, or wherever it be eaten, turn to poison.”

He stalked away toward the hut, Anastasio following.

“No,” muttered Anastasio after him; “this is not thus. Fortino, when I taunted you in Tizapan — this was an ill thing to do.”

Fortino went on unhearing.

“An exceedingly ill thing, Fortino,” said the long Anastasio, plaintively.

Fortino went into the hut and lay down on the floor. Anastasio remained outside and presently said, the sound penetrating the walls of reeds:

“They will not be ashes or poison. Fortino, to your brethren, the fish will still taste like fish.”

Fortino heard not. He lay there for hours. He did not stir even when many weapons were simultaneously discharged at a distance. After long days he was, in the matter of deeds, like the old Fortino; but never so in manner or in heart. He was silent, morose, till his death. He never left the lake. He fished and ate and slept, and fished again, buried here; a man of great faith in a world that needs faith; a man of honesty that, like a rock that holds at bay the sea, no force under the sun of heaven could have moved one jot — in a world where honesty is all too rare; a man, not without genius and the spirit of creation (though dulled somewhat by ancestry and his time) — in a world where men devoid of both rule millions; a man of no selfishness — in a world that, ridden by selfishness, calls most anguish-stricken for that very quality which he had.

The march of soldiers through the plaza had been prolonged beyond the plaza. It came to the narrow, rocky street that leads up St. Michael. They had taken the condemned one through the town's middle. He was not crushed by coming death; he thought little of it, feared it not. He thought most constantly of Clarita, thanking his God that he had been able to prevail upon her to go. At least she, whom his soul loved, was away from this. It was said of him about the town that never was there seen in its poor streets a face so beautiful as his.

They led him straight up the steep and rugged hill, the crowd remaining at its bottom. The example would be held high, in sight of all the world, that revolutions might be no more. The climb was difficult and wearying. But he never halted or seemed fatigued. It was rather that he led them than that they led him. He was among the first, even the first. He went up steadily, strongly, his eyes raised. Cactus and boulder and shrub he saw not. He seemed to run to meet death, so that the soldiers scarcely could follow. They emerged at last on the summit. He was already there. He stood on the highest rock and swept that incomparable scene with his eyes — Chapala under him, its red-tiled roofs lit by the setting sun; the cape and the lake's vast sweep beyond; the island lying small and black in the water's middle; all the great bosom of that inland sea casting up light to him; Tizapan invisible; blue mountains rising in the eternal circle.

It was then that his last sorrow fell like a curtain on him. He gazed at the sands of the beach and the row of tiny huts along it. He had lived there in his only happy time. Before all this wild dream he had been full of life there; he had had her, too, and

the love of her ; and there where the sun fell yellowest he had played with her in the long evenings or on moonlit nights, in the sand. It swept over him that there was the Eden from which some stern power had driven them out. He passed his hand over his eyes and was heard to say :

“That I might turn — that I might retrace these steps and go back — my God ! my God ! then might I find the cherubim and the flaming sword that turneth every way, and know at last where is the tree of life.”

They let him stand where he was, and, the arrangements made and the word given, he was shot. It is the beautiful custom of the country to erect crosses at places of blood. On St. Michael's stony head one may still see the cross which marks the spot where he fell.





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